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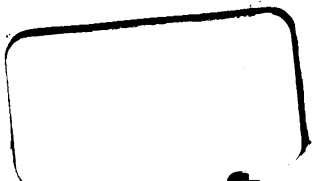
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Bohemian Papers

John W. Graham.

May 1898.

*Frymaw
Helensburgh.*







“A terrible game, in which the stakes are life and death.”

BOHEMIAN PAPERS

BY

GEORGE EYRE-TODD

Author of

"Byways of the Scottish Border," "Sketch-Book of the North," etc.

GLASGOW

MORISON BROTHERS

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To the Editors of the Glasgow Herald and of Chambers's Journal I am indebted for permission to republish several of these papers, which appeared originally in their columns.

"Shipped as Boy," the second paper, it is right to state, is founded upon an experience, not of the writer, but of a relative, now an Honorary Sheriff-Substitute in the north, to whose kind interest and recollection more than one previous essay has been owed.

G. E.-T.

BOHEMIAN PAPERS.

FOUR MONTHS OF BOHEMIA.

I.

PROBABLY the majority of men begin their apprenticeship to the "black art" of literature by the writing of verse. Perhaps the reason is that, before a young man has any real thought to express, the desire of expression awakens in him, and verse suggests itself naturally for the charm of word-weaving alone. At any rate, in an obscure corner of the bookshelves of most men who make their living by the pen there is generally to be found, if diligently searched for, some modest volume of poems to whose authorship in his primrose youth the owner of the shelves must plead guilty.

To this rule I had been no exception. After accumulating by degrees a goodly budget of

more or less ambitious poetry, I had sent it round the publishers in the usual way, and had experienced the usual result. I have still by me the half-dozen or so of letters in which these gentlemen politely, but distinctly and unanimously, declined to invest their capital in my compositions. Their unanimity, to any other than a writer of verse, would probably have been conclusive enough, and such adventures as fall to be chronicled in these pages would never in that case have occurred. I was, however, of a somewhat obstinate turn of mind, and moreover, had not Sir George Grove, when editor of *Macmillan's*, written a few encouraging words about some verses which I had sent him? I had persevered, therefore, and at last had found a Scottish publisher who, upon the security of a ten-pound note, was willing to print my book. It was duly published, received fairly by the critics, and, from the publisher's point of view, did as well as could be expected—for poetry. Next year, upon the basis of a remittance of fifteen pounds, a London publisher had undertaken to produce a second volume. This was an ambitious poem of the epic sort. It was printed and bound in an æsthetic way, and of

it the publisher sold a total of exactly nine copies. Then it occurred to me that there might be publishers who made an income out of printing poetry at the poet's expense. It does not pay them to carry the enterprise further, and to try to sell what they print. Upon this consideration I made up my mind never again to pay for the publication of my own work, concluding with some reason that if it did not pay a publisher to undertake the risk of production, it was hardly likely to pay the author. Twelve months later, as the charge for storage of the "remainder" of my latter volume appeared to increase rather than diminish with time, I thought it best to have the entire edition returned to me. This, I believe, is still lying in an attic somewhere, and is at the disposal of anyone who wishes to buy poetry—by the pound.

At the same time, however, I had written prose. Stories, articles, reviews of books, criticisms of pictures, all had been essayed, and had duly found a place in the columns of certain provincial papers. Country journals of all shades of political opinion had been favoured with these lucubrations, for which nothing was expected, and nothing, of

course, was received. But sooner or later gratuitous work of this sort becomes unsatisfactory. In the week in which the revised version of the Old Testament came out, my criticism had formed the leading article of a well-known east-country paper, and, among other encouragements, inspired by the sincere thanks of the editor, I had begun to aim at greater things. I had not hesitated to send tales and articles to magazines like *Cornhill*, *Macmillan's*, and *Temple Bar*; and it mattered little that sooner or later all of them were returned. It is wonderful upon how little substance ambition and hope will thrive. A word of encouragement from an editor, a written note instead of the too frequent printed form of refusal, a qualification in the terms of the refusal itself, all these are turned by the literary aspirant into grounds of belief that with better opportunities he cannot fail to succeed.

So at least it had been with me. I had begun to think that, if unencumbered with other occupation, and possessing the advantage and prestige of living in London itself, I must shortly make my way into the flowery lanes of literature. I had read Robert Buchanan's

account of his plunge into London literary life along with the ill-fated David Gray. I knew something of the story of William Black's departure for the south. And the facts of Dr Johnson's attack on the metropolis with a few pounds and the tragedy of "Irene" in his pocket were in the knowledge of everyone. But a still more seductive story had been told me by a friend. This friend had been a Baptist minister in London, and connected with some periodicals there, and the incident which he related had happened at that time. One night there had called on him a young man from the far north, with a hatful of newspaper clippings of his work, upon the strength of which he had hoped to get employment on some London journal. The youth was in doleful enough spirits when he called, for he had that day shown his work to Mr Macdonnell, afterwards of the *Times*, and had been advised by him to go away home again to Aberdeenshire. It appeared, however, that Mr Macdonnell had not read the cuttings. The Baptist editor, therefore, bade his visitor leave these with him, and return next night in time for a cup of tea. Next night the aspirant after journalistic bread and butter,

having started rather early for his destination, to beguile the time had made his way round by Cheyne Walk; and at tea he told how, talking with lamplighters, shopkeepers, and crossing-sweepers, he had happened upon odd ends of information about the habits of the Sage of Chelsea. "After tea," said my friend, "I told my visitor that I had read his cuttings, and thought them very good indeed, and I advised him, notwithstanding Mr Macdonnell's wet blanket, to go home and set down on paper in his best manner all the story he had just recounted of his exploration of Carlyle's neighbourhood, and send it to the *Spectator*. He did this next day. The article was accepted, printed, and copied into a large number of papers; the young man was invited to contribute more to the same columns; and now he is editor of one of the most influential journals in the North of England."

A story like this was an inspiration in itself. What had been done before might be done again, and, most of all, the advantage was apparent of working at headquarters. There was needed but a breath more, a little practical promise of success, to blow my smouldering

resolution into flame; and presently that desideratum arrived.

In the pages of the *Athenæum* one week there appeared an advertisement for contributors to a new periodical about to be issued in London. I applied, was favoured with a "dummy" copy of the publication and an inquiry as to terms, and finally was requested to send in "copy" to be paid for at the handsome rate of five shillings a column. Almost at the same time a story of mine was accepted by a weekly society paper dating from Charing Cross. The single exception which the editor of the latter paper took to my story was that it was written in the first person, and there was a rule to print nothing so written in his pages. Only too glad, however, to find an opening, I carefully rewrote the tale, sent it back to him, and received the cheering reply that he would "be sure to make use of my stories."

Now, if ever, was my chance, and I determined to strike the iron while it was hot. Apparently all that was needed was my presence in person to follow up these opportunities and to discover more. Among a hundred reasons I argued that no undertaking could expect to succeed

which was only attempted in half-hearted fashion, and I persuaded myself that it was impossible to serve two masters. It must be commerce or letters; and I had made up my mind for letters.

It was at this point that I experienced the antagonism of my friends. While merely a relaxation my literary performances had enjoyed their admiration and encouragement, but the proposal to adopt the pen as a regular means of support excited their apprehensions, and was an entirely different matter. My father expressed his decided disapproval of the project, and even my dear mother, who alone of my relatives had seemed to sympathise with my ambitions, sighed and expressed many fears. It was, however, I argued, one of those crises in life in which a man must take his fate into his own hands and decide for himself. The very fact of such decision is sometimes necessary to prove fitness for the part assumed. Accordingly I did my best to calm the apprehensions of my relatives, explained to them the danger of attempting to sit on two stools, and, determining that in the utmost emergency I should never at any rate fall back on them for help, I gathered together

my few belongings, put what little money I possessed into my pocket, and prepared to seek my fortune.

I am not likely soon to forget the afternoon on which I went to take leave of my mother. Excited by her fears, she had done her best at the last to dissuade me from the enterprise, and at this final interview we differed on a matter of detail. She was vexed and weary-looking, and I had been obstinate in carrying out my desire, but at the moment of parting she went to her room, and, coming back, slipped five sovereigns into my hand. There were tears in her eyes as I bade her good-bye, and as I went away along the road she stood at an upper window looking after me till I was out of sight. I did not know that it was the last time she should ever bid me good-bye, and that when I saw her again it would be on the shadowy edge of the gulf whose partings are long farewells.

Next day I took a single third-class ticket for London. I was twenty-two years of age, and had fifteen gold sovereigns in my pocket.

II.

ON the strength of my two books of verse I had lately been admitted a member of a certain select literary *coterie* in Glasgow. This club was on the eve of producing a volume of original ballads. The book had not yet been published, but a few early copies had been issued to members, and with a view to furnishing myself immediately upon arrival with a smart introduction to some periodical, I occupied myself upon the journey up to London with mastering its contents. Material, however, for a much better introduction to editorial good graces, had I only been able to perceive it at the time, travelled to London in the compartment along with me. At the moment before starting from the platform of St Enoch's, when I was congratulating myself on the likelihood of having the compartment to myself, there had come hurrying along an entire family of five, with parcels, band-boxes, and a violin case, and, just as the train was beginning to move, the whole party had been bundled in over my feet.

Here, if I had had eyes to see it, was a

glimpse of Bohemia *after* marriage. The father of the family was a poor violinist from some theatrical orchestra. He was only in hopes of getting an engagement in the south, and the parcels and bundles in the compartment racks apparently contained all his worldly possessions except his quiet-eyed wife and the three infants. Yet never was there seen a happier or more exemplary fellow. His wife was almost entirely occupied in nursing the baby at her breast, and the care of the other two children fell to the little artist himself. In this task his resources were endless. After doing duty as literature and as a luncheon tray, his newspaper never ceased going through a series of curious transformations, from paper hats and boats to regiments of foot soldiers and processions of railway trains marshalled on the compartment windows. He made continual amusement out of nothing; he never lost his temper, and never grew tired; and the cares of the morrow were apparently all forgotten in the pleasing cares of the present.

Here was a subject worth studying out—human material for a good short story at least. But, with the mistake of many beginners, I was bent upon more “literary” matter.

It was a hot summer night as M—— and I drove south through the London streets in a “growler,” my luggage on the roof. I had only been in London once before—a single night on the way home from a continental trip—and the look of these streets and their life now brought a curious exhilaration with it. There is something in the air of London which is an inspiration in itself. When the boys run along the street crying the evening papers the latest sensation has not yet had time to grow cold, as it has farther north; while the very sight of the light burning in the clock-tower at Westminster—the sign that Parliament is sitting—gives one the impression that he is at the hub of the world’s life. Here, one cannot help feeling, is the place where history is made, and here, if anywhere, great things are to be done.

M—— had met me at the station. He was my chief friend, and it was partly owing to his example that I had finally determined on going south. A year previously he had thrown up his situation at the desk of a bank in Glasgow, and had betaken himself to London to pursue art and win fame through the medium of magazine illustration. Since then he had managed to exist.

By temperament, in spite of his ingenuous humour, M—— was inclined to be down-hearted at times, a circumstance which, by contrast, of course always put me into extraordinarily good spirits. But on that night he was at his best, and we sat late in his lodging, talking eagerly over our prospects and plans. So far, in spite of hard work, his own success had not been astonishing. Other qualities than imagination and artistic execution, he had discovered, were necessary in the walk he had chosen. The possibilities of the printing-block had to be considered as well as the composition of the picture. A regular business connection, too, had to be acquired, as in any other trade. These difficulties, however, he said he was now on the point of overcoming. As for me, my difficulties were not yet apparent. And so we were enthusiastic and entirely happy that night in anticipation.

And here I should say that in the greatest straits of that four months' adventure it was always an immense help to go and have a talk with M——. The chat with another aspirant in the same struggle served always as a fillip, and inspired one with the courage of comrade-

ship. He must be in a black enough case who is entirely without a comrade in all that hurrying Babylon. The Slough of Despond lies here and there in the path of the boldest of us.

Next day I found apartments, or rather an apartment, for myself, and began work.

This matter of lodgings was in itself a bit of experience. I ought, of course, to have gone to the orthodox Bloomsbury, the neighbourhood of the British Museum, where I might have made friendships with people pursuing the same object as myself. But M—— lived in South Lambeth, beyond Kennington Park, and, to begin with, I took a room near him.

Mrs Berdner's was one of a row of little houses in a side street, and there for six shillings a week I had a bedroom "with use of the parlour." The sum was moderate enough, but I was not long in discovering that the use of the parlour was for my purposes entirely hypothetical. That advantage was shared by other lodgers in the house, who were musical and social; and so, after struggling all forenoon to write something in face of continual costermonger shouts from the street outside of "Three

for tuppence, three for tuppence!" varied by a plaintive refrain on the subject of "Blooming lavender, sixteen good branches a penny!" I would be invaded by the "upstairs front," a schoolmaster, who regularly brought home a friend to practise the piccolo with him to a pianoforte accompaniment.

On a shaky little round card-table in my bedroom behind I managed to write an article or two and a couple of idyllic tales, which latter brought me—one of them a year, the other two years later—the sum of four pounds ten shillings between them. But, unfortunately, almost on a level with the bedroom window-sill was the top of the party wall between the yards behind, and the coping of that wall was the select rendezvous of my landlady's heir-apparent and his friends for the purpose of acquiring the art of the penny whistle.

After struggling amongst these difficulties for a fortnight or three weeks, I came to the conclusion that Mrs Berdner's apartments were not designed for purposes of literary inspiration, and that to do work at all I must move elsewhere. It took a great deal of courage on my part, nevertheless, to give the necessary warning. At

last I managed it by saying that the necessities of my occupation would compel me to live nearer town. At this announcement Mrs Berdner, I remember, was good enough to shed a few tears, and to inform me that I was "the best she had had." I have since regretted that I did not get her to state that opinion upon paper; it might have had a money value in arranging terms with later landladies. Poor woman! I fear she was having something of a struggle, like myself, to make her way.

I was on the point of taking another lodging off Vauxhall Bridge Road—it was exactly the sort of place one reads about in novels, a couple of rooms opening off each other, with shabby easy chairs, ink-stained carpets, and the conventional "slavey"—when the mistress of the establishment informed me, with polite consideration, that there were "no insects." The suggestion was enough.

At the back of the Dean of Westminster's garden there was another place—a clean, bright house, with a buxom matron for a landlady. The first room she offered me was at a pound a week. I explained that I did not wish to give more than six or eight shillings. "Ah, I

am sorry," she said, "I have quite the room to suit you, but it is already let." She showed me the room, exactly the place in which to do good work, its window looking into the greenery of the Dean's garden. It was occupied by the member of parliament for C——.

I settled at last in comfortable enough if somewhat tiny quarters. In the heart of Westminster my room looked out upon an orchard and the red roof of a church. The sweet quarter chimes from that church's belfry came to be company to me, and as I wrought on far into the night I remember noticing how regularly they struck as I reached a particular line on each page of manuscript. In the front room, separated from mine by a wooden partition, I used to hear a fellow-lodger every morning quizzing our landlady somewhat freely. The latter was a handsome, powerful young woman, without children, whose husband belonged to the police force, and she told me by and by, when we came to know each other, that my neighbour was an old gentleman possessing no relatives, who had promised, if she took care of him meanwhile, to leave her at his death a substantial legacy.

There are thousands of lonely people like that in London, but it was a revelation to me then to discover that there might be men and women so far left solitary in the crowded world as to be glad to purchase friendly offices for their old age in this way.

On the day after my arrival in the metropolis I wrote a criticism on the Glasgow club's book of ballads; and next morning, full of hopes and heart-sinkings, with the criticism in my pocket, I went in on the top of a car to make my first attack upon Fleet Street.

III.

FLEET STREET! There, more than anywhere else in the world, perhaps, a young fellow is likely to realise something of the odds that are against him in his attempt to win a place and a name. In the ceaseless, tremendous rush of that human stream pouring past he begins to understand that other men are making efforts as well as he; that what he is about to attempt is no mere child's play in which one may stop and laugh and rest awhile at pleasure, but a

terrible game of which the stakes are life and death, and that the other players, with all the advantages on their side, are fearfully in earnest.

Some feeling of this sort was upon me as I turned into that historic street of journalism with my article in my pocket; and I consciously walked a trifle slower to give myself time for a mental breath before putting possibilities to the touch.

Just at this point, to the immense surprise of both of us, I met M——. I had not seen him since the morning after my arrival in London. He smiled in his undemonstrative way. "Has the invasion begun already?" he said.

I told him that I was going with a criticism of a book published that day to ask for work on *The Literary World*.

"Ah!" he said, "Peter Bayne is the editor of that paper, isn't he?"

M—— was on his way to Paternoster Row to try to sell some drawings, and we wished each other good luck and parted.

I walked on briskly now. It was a point gained to know the editor's name. "That's the advantage," I said to myself, "of having a friend

in the business;" and I marched easily into Messrs Clarke & Co.'s office and asked a clerk at the counter if Mr Bayne was in?

The young man was too polite to show a ghost of a smile, but I felt my face becoming tartan when I heard him, turning to a comrade, ask if he thought *Dr* Bayne would be in.

Then he directed me across the street to chambers in Chancery Lane, where, in room number fifteen, I would probably find the Doctor.

Up a stair in Chancery Lane I discovered a long panelled passage with a row of doors on each side numbered like prison cells, and at one of these doors I knocked.

"Come in," said a gruff voice, and I turned the handle.

It was a small bare room, with a table in the middle, at which an elderly gentleman with iron-grey hair was writing lines very wide apart on a sheet of foolscap. In a moment he looked up with a grim "Well, sir?"

"Dr Bayne, I think?" I said.

"That is my name," he replied.

"I understand," I went on, "that you are the editor of *The Literary World*."

"No, sir, I am not the editor of *The Literary World*." And he bent again to his writing.

There was a second's pause. The situation was truly delightful.

"Then, Dr Bayne," I managed at last to say, "I have to apologise very much for troubling you, but who *is* the editor of that paper?" And I explained my errand.

Five minutes later I was back in the office in Fleet Street inquiring for Mr Clarke, junior. Instead of him I finally saw his representative, and again explained my object—I had in my pocket the review of a book published that day, and I should be glad to get some work to do for his paper.

My interlocutor shook his head. There was no opening—all their arrangements were already made—apparently I did not quite understand how these things were managed on *The Literary World*. Even the article which I had written would not be of the slightest service.

I asked a question or two.

He was sorry there was no prospect of an opening on their staff. He would advise me to go round the newspaper offices, offer my services, and show what work I had done. Many young

fellows had made the same application as myself. Some of them had succeeded in finding berths elsewhere. He should be pleased to see me again later and hear how I had prospered.

And so the interview was over, and I was aware that the first arrow of my quiver had missed its mark.

It was with heavy steps that I made my way out again into Fleet Street, and looked up and down. Enough had been done, I felt, for one day. I was too much discouraged to think of applying just then at any of the newspaper offices, and besides, newspaper work was hardly what I was aiming at. I went home, and hopeless of finding another market for my article, posted it off to one of my editor friends in the north, in whose columns of the following week it duly appeared.

That night M—— and I consoled ourselves for our equal ill-luck by going to see “Olivia” from a corner of “the gods’” gallery at the Lyceum. This was a panacea which we found frequent occasion to make use of afterwards—the consolation which the world of art affords for the disappointments of reality.

A few days later, as nothing seemed to be forthcoming regarding my contributions to *The Eye*, the new periodical which had agreed to pay me five shillings a column for "copy," I thought it might be a stroke of policy to call at the office.

The office, however, was somewhat difficult to find, and when found turned out to be the mere loft of a small jobbing printer in a back court somewhere near Shoe Lane. The editor was "out" when I called, and so was everybody else except an apprentice compositor, whom I interrupted in the munching of bread and cheese at his master's desk, and who could give me no information whatever on the subject of *The Eye*. At a later visit I got somewhat greater satisfaction, the printer whose office had been given as the publishing address of the periodical being apparently a very honest fellow. But it was evident, from the meagreness of the arrangements which were being made for the production of the new journal, that no great expectations were likely to be fulfilled in that quarter.

The Eye eventually did appear, ran for a week or two, and then, so far as I am aware, went

the way of a thousand similar enterprises, — into limbo. At any rate no cheque from its manager ever reached my pocket.

Some weeks afterwards I made another call of the same sort.

The editor on whose account I had rewritten a story from the first person into the third, and who had assured me that he would certainly make use of my work, had dated his letter from near Charing Cross. To this address I went twice. It was a solicitor's private office, and on each occasion I interviewed a gentleman who sat in solitary state in a room lined with japanned deed-boxes. At him I inquired each time in the politest manner possible for the editor, but in neither case did I get satisfaction. The office, it appeared, was merely used as a receiving place for correspondence which was called for at uncertain intervals; and the editor had no other available address. Letters themselves failed to bring a reply from behind that cleverly contrived barrier, and by and by, I gave up the prospect of any remunerative opening in that direction too, as a will-o'-the-wisp which could only lead to disappointment.

Still another visit which I paid at that time

afforded me a suggestive hint as to the realities of literary life in London.

A few weeks before leaving Glasgow I had heard, through a friend connected with one of the newspapers there, that a post was about to become vacant on the staff of the *Art Journal*, and I had been furnished with an introduction to the retiring sub-editor. But the information had reached me rather late to be of use, and the post had been filled up before my application was received. Mr T——, however, to whom my introduction had been addressed, and whom I had apprised of my intention to make a descent upon London, had kindly asked me to come and see him when I arrived. He was the author, I knew, of a well-known biography, and he might be able, I thought, to give me some valuable information and introductions which would help towards success. Besides, I owed him thanks for his good offices to my recent application. I called upon him, therefore, at his new address, a well-known art gallery, for whose management he had given up his sub-editorship.

Pleasant, straightforward, and business-like he turned out to be, and he was good enough to

express considerable interest in my attempt and prospects. Nothing but good honest work, he assured me, would be of any service in effecting a footing. There were great difficulties in the way, but he did not doubt that in time it might be possible to accomplish my purpose. Meanwhile he would be pleased to see me at his house, but—here the light of practical knowledge appeared—I must not expect to meet much company, literary folk, and so forth, there. “All the stuff one reads in novels,” he said, “about the gay Bohemianism of authorship, is sheer nonsense. The men who do anything real in literature are steady, hard-working fellows who have no time to throw away.”

Hints of this sort possessed value, and afforded me a certain amount of encouragement, suggesting as they did, that success in letters, like success in most things else, was seldom the result of a sudden *coup*. Accordingly I wrought away with good heart. If I failed in my attempt it was not likely to be for want of the hard work extolled by Mr T—. Manuscript after manuscript I turned out, upon all sorts of subjects. I took them round to the publishers' offices in person in order to save

postage; when a packet came back from one magazine editor I immediately passed it on to another; and, to prevent mistakes in the way of offering the same manuscript twice to the same man, I kept a sort of ledger in which I registered every attempt.

At the end of three months not a single article or story had been accepted. The fact was, of course, that I had not yet discovered my *forte*, that my work was not good enough, and that in most cases I was offering hayseed to lions of the desert—I had made no study of the tastes of each particular editor. But I began to suspect that I was not going about matters in the right way. Accordingly, while there were still a few shillings in my pocket, I inserted an advertisement in the columns of the *Athenæum* stating what I had done and what I desired to do.

That advertisement led to the most curious and most significant adventure of all my experience in London.

IV.

MY advertisement in the *Athenæum* stated that a young man, furnished with the usual unimpeachable references, and possessed of some slight experience as a writer of criticism, leading articles, and fiction, wished to obtain a magazine sub-editorship or literary work of any kind. For that advertisement I paid four shillings, and it brought me exactly one reply. The letter which I received was headed with an imposing address at Hampstead, and its writer informed me that a weekly periodical was about to be started in most promising circumstances. If I cared to invest five hundred pounds as a fifth share in the new journal a sub-editorship would be entrusted to me. Failing this, if I were willing to pay a premium of one hundred pounds, a place would be found for me on the staff at a salary, to begin with, of a hundred and fifty a year.

Here was exactly what I was in search of—a clear avenue to regular literary employment, with that most desirable feature attached, a regular salary. All that was necessary in order

to enjoy these advantages was to persuade my friends to invest a trifle of money in a concern which its promoter declared to be certain of success. I did not do this, however. Instead, I wrote to my correspondent stating that as I did not happen to have five hundred pounds just then at hand, I regretted to have to decline his offer of a fifth share in the new enterprise. In his second suggestion I was more able, I said, to meet him. I should be happy to accept his kind offer of a position on the staff of the journal, and to allow one hundred pounds of my first year's salary to remain as premium in his hands.

To this very reasonable proposal I received no answer for three days; then a note came saying that if I would make my way to Hampstead the writer would be glad to talk the matter over with me. By this time my resources were getting to a very low ebb indeed, and it was with almost my final shilling that I purchased a return ticket for Hampstead Heath. When there it took me more time than might have been expected from the name to find Verulam House, my correspondent's address. It turned out at last to be the half of a small

brick villa of about three apartments, one of a row. The door was opened by my correspondent himself, a middle-aged, shifty-eyed man of thirty-five or so, who greeted me with an official air, and conducted me to his "study." The latter was the front room of the house; it smelt yet of varnish, and was meagrely furnished with three chairs, a writing-table, and a small cheap bookcase. By way of hospitality, and perhaps with a view to assist business, my host went into the back premises and brought two tumblers and a jug of beer. Then he sat down at his desk and the campaign began.

The talk, guided by him, ranged over all sorts of subjects—politics, art, religion, and the latest science; and as he seemed anxious to elicit my views on all these, we had quite an interesting conversation. It was only when the beer was done, and its effect might be supposed to have become serviceable, that my interlocutor came to practical matters. What he was about to communicate, he premised, would be in strict confidence between ourselves.

The periodical on the point of being started was to be called *Everywhere*, and would deal with every kind of subject. No existing journal

had so wide a field of interest to work upon, and no other journal accordingly was so well assured of success. One of the chief features proposed was a set of local papers, "Everywhere in Hampstead," "Everywhere in Westminster," and so on, which could not fail to elicit wide patronage from inhabitants of the places treated. There would also be columns under such headings as "Everywhere in the Nursery," "Everywhere in the Exchange," whose attractions must immediately render the publication popular. It would contain, besides, by the editor himself, a novel of military cadet life, to a chapter or two of which—miserable stuff—I was treated by way of sample.

This was the enterprise, he said, in which he offered me a share. A glance, he felt sure, was enough for me to see that there "was money in it." It was an opportunity such as occurred to few young men beginning a literary career, and he had only been induced to offer it to me by a certain distinction in the tone of my advertisement. Finally, he suggested that if I did not see my way to investing anything in the journal myself, my friends might be persuaded to do something for me in the matter. If I

would furnish him with their addresses, he would himself write and propose an arrangement.

At this point I asked him what he meant to reply to my proposal regarding the premium. The question took him somewhat aback. He said he should require to consult the other capitalists interested in the enterprise before making any arrangement.

"Well," I said, rising, "I shall be glad to hear from you if you have a post with a salary to offer me; or I shall be glad to write stories and articles for you at a fair price; but I have no intention either of investing money myself in your journal or of asking my friends to do so."

And I came away, furnished with food for meditation on the nature of the genus Shark, but otherwise poorer, by five shillings and a day's work, for my advertisement in the columns of the *Athenæum*.

A five-shilling piece may seem a small enough sum to mention seriously; but when it happens to be one's last, the matter assumes a different complexion. This was literally the position in which I now found myself, and the days went on and still there was no appearance of a turn in fortune's tide. Only those who have had the

pleasant experience can understand the peculiar feelings with which one sees his landlady bring in her little bill on a Saturday morning, when he is conscious that there is absolutely nothing in his pocket to meet it. Gradually one's valuables find their way to the custody, as Mr Augustus Sala once put it, "of that eminent Lombard firm of Attenborgo"; and when these have gone, and still circumstances promise no improvement, the case becomes more than ever interesting.

In this predicament I hit upon another literary possibility. So far I had been unable myself to dispose of any of my manuscripts; but on the front page of the *Athenæum* appeared regularly the advertisement of a gentleman, "lately the literary adviser of one of the foremost publishing houses," who undertook to dispose of authors' manuscripts for them. To this person I betook myself. His address was in Paternoster Row, and I found him occupying a diminutive office up a stair in that very literary locality. Nothing could have been more polite than his reception of his visitor. It was owing to his advertisement in the *Athenæum*, I said, that I had called; and he smiled blandly and assured me

that he should be very happy to be of any service to me. This was encouraging, and I began to think that I had at last discovered the man who could be of practical assistance to my enterprise. But when I began to tell him what I had been doing, and to ask him how he would propose to further my work, he informed me by the way that his initial fee for consultation was three guineas.

There was some difficulty after that in carrying on the conversation. I had expected that he would require payment by results, though it did not occur to me at the moment, in face of the polite manner of his demand, to suggest that he should be content with this. At any rate, it was no part of my plan to buy a pig in a sack, to pay three guineas for what after all might be empty enough counsel. Moreover, although I had been willing, the money was not in my possession. So, as expeditiously as possible, I made my retreat.

Things had now come to a very critical pass indeed, and every day was putting me into a tighter place. About this time I wrote two stories, one for a journal in the north, the other for a competition advertised by Messrs Tillotson

of Bolton, the well-known "farmers" of fiction for local papers. Both of these stories, "Hazel-knowe" and "Count Ivan's Christmas," were subsequently adjudged prizes; but the adjudication was not made known till months later, when it had ceased to be of such vital interest to me.

In our worst straits M—— and I endeavoured to comfort ourselves with the assurance that other men had been as badly off as we, and yet had finally succeeded and made their mark. Besides, we argued, an apprenticeship must be served to art and literature as to other occupations. Poets may be born, we assured each other, but skill in writing and drawing can come only from experience.

Meanwhile, in spite of our philosophy, it began to appear just possible that we, the apprentices, might starve. To write home for help meant confession of failure and possible recall, and that was not to be thought of; and so we made shift by all the means in our power to battle on. Long ago we had put ourselves upon famine rations. There was a shop near the head of Whitehall where it was possible to get a large cup of cocoa and a sandwich-roll for

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Next day at the stipulated time I was under Nelson's Monument, indulging in pleasant anticipations of prospective release from embarrassment, and of more immediate satisfaction of a sharp appetite; but though one o'clock came M—— did not come with it. Impatient, anxious, and hungry I waited, while hundreds of happy, careless folk went past. It was nearly half-past one when M—— came slowly across the square out of the Strand. His face was about as long as the average violin, and he was dragging his feet lugubriously. The reason was obvious—he had still his parcel of drawings under his arm.

“Well, my dear fellow,” I asked, “what is your worst news?”

The news, imparted in most despondent tones, was about as bad as could be. The editor had gone away for a four weeks' holiday. The drawings were of no use to anyone else. We should both be starved before he came back.

“Nonsense,” I said, “there is something to be done before that.”

Then I propounded an idea I had had in my mind for some time in case of the worst fortune befalling us.

"Do you mind," I said, "engaging temporarily in the theatrical profession?"

With a minor part in the theatre to bring us in something nightly, I conceived we should still be able to prosecute our several arts in some cheap garret somewhere during the day. Accordingly, we were presently making polite inquiries for the stage door in Drury Lane.

It was a curious experience. When Cameron, the *Standard's* war correspondent, was shot in the Soudan, I, like many others, I suppose, had applied for his place; and when Sir Charles Warren was getting up a force of mounted infantry to go out to "settle" Bechuanaland, I had been one of the volunteers; but it needed far more temerity than either of these cases to walk into this shabby back doorway and ask to see Mr Augustus Harris. The porter, when we made our inquiry, eyed us curiously, as the people of whom we had asked the way in the street had done. Apparently there was something peculiar in our appearance and errand.

We were not fated, however, to see the *deus ex machinè* of pantomime himself. Mr Harris sent down word that he was very much occupied, and should be glad if we would write our

message. M—— thereupon wrote a note. It was brief and vague, for the porter was watching the writing—we should be glad to obtain any occupation in the theatre.

It was of no use. A general answer came back that all arrangements were made; there was no place that could be offered to us.

So we turned away, defeated at another point. The last straw, however, in our case did not break anybody's back. When we were once more outside that stage door we looked at each other, the comical element in the situation dawned upon us, and we burst into a roar of laughter.

George Sand in "Consuelo" has remarked that "one must be without resources in an unknown country to know what a marvellous sense of security, what an inventive and enterprising genius is revealed as if by magic in the artist who has just spent his last farthing." This curious fact found an illustration with us. We were not many yards down the street when M—— suddenly turned to me with the remark, "You once told me you had invested in some shares of copper companies; you have these lying by you yet, have you not?"

This was nothing more than fact. Some years

previously, with the remains of a little legacy which had fallen to me, I had foolishly enough bought shares in a new copper company. They had earned no dividend, it is true, and I had therefore entirely forgotten them, but they were still worth something. From these forgotten shares our deliverance came. Upon them we promptly "raised the wind," settled our landladies' bills, and repossessed ourselves of our valuables, while I even went the length of ordering a new suit of clothes, regardless of expense.

Blessings seldom come singly. A few days before the occurrence of the Drury Lane episode I had happened to send a descriptive article to the editor of *The Graphic*. That night when I reached my lodging I found my article returned with a kind note from Mr Locker saying that in its present condition the paper was much too long, but that, if I would cut it down to about a third, it would probably suit his purpose.

No one knows the rapture of such an acceptance but one who has enjoyed it in my circumstances of the time. It was my first step on the ladder which I had been seeking so long to reach. Next morning when M—— called I had already written the article down to the required length, and we

carried it to the office in the Strand together. In honour of the occasion, I promised to treat M—— to a good seat that night at the play.

Alas! before night arrived I had far other thoughts to struggle with. A telegram had reached me stating that my mother was sinking fast, and that if I wished to see her again I must hasten home to the north at once.

How often it is thus in life!—we grasp the flower only to find that in some unthought-of way its bloom is shed. So it happened in my unhappy case. She who alone had looked kindly on the young ambition, whose sympathy had healed many a wound of failure, whose delighted surprise was to be the chief pleasure of success—she was the only one who was not to see the beginning of the turning of the tide.

My first article in the greater world of letters was printed in *The Graphic* on the day of my mother's funeral.

SHIPPED AS BOY.

I.

I HAD made up my mind to be a sailor. Upon that proceeding I was quite determined. Moreover, it appeared to me, I was of age enough to think for myself. Was I not nearly twelve years old, and had I not, to my own complete satisfaction, weighed in my own mind all the disadvantages which could be urged against a seafaring life? My father, it was true, pooh-poohed when I stated my intention to him. But had he not been a "middy" himself when little more than my age, and had he not encountered all the perils of the sea quite safely? Was he not proud enough, too, of the fine silver medal which he made a point of wearing always on great occasions?

By the way, on Sundays, when everyone else was at church, I used to get this medal out of its case, pin it to my breast, and issue commands in the most authoritative voice I could

muster to quite a large crew—of chairs—in the dining-room.

It was the way of fathers, I had decided, to think their sons could not do the things which they themselves had done when they were boys. Mine told me, when he saw that my thoughts were really bent in the direction of the sea, that a sailor's life was a weary business. A seaman seldom saw wife or friends, he said; one half of the time he spent whistling for a wind in the broiling heat of the tropics, and the other half he might be battling for his life in the darkness of a winter tempest.

This, however, appeared to me by no means a disagreeable prospect. Privately, I did not think I should ever marry, so, as far as that was concerned, the absence from home did not count; and when I rose to be a captain I could, I reassured myself, take my mother with me for a voyage sometimes. As for the idle calms of the tropics, had I not read "Tom Cringle's Log," and seen there how, in "the doldrums," the sailors took to spinning yarns in the fo'c'sle—all about sea fights, and chasings of the French and the capturing of prizes. The chance of being shipwrecked, too, was no deterrent. To tell the truth, I had a secret hope that I

might be cast ashore on a desert island somewhere for a year or two, with lots of axes and guns and such-like, and have a man Friday, and fight with cannibals. My mind was quite made up. All other professions I looked upon as "lubberly," and already I referred to a "capful of wind" that had blown down a pear tree in our garden, with all the proper indifference of an "old salt."

All my Saturday half-holidays were spent at Sea-lock, a small shipping port about three miles from our town. An uncle of mine owned a warehouse there, for supplying ships' stores, and in his house I had already made the acquaintance of more than one sea captain. Casually strolling around the quay afterwards, where I knew that the vessels of these friends were loading, I managed once or twice to secure an invitation on board, and was allowed to explore the mysteries of fore-castle and cabin.

The snuggest and most delightful dwellings in the world these appeared to be; especially the cabin, with its mahogany-panelled bunks, far to be preferred to the humdrum parlour at home, and my own little, dimity-curtained bed.

While the captain was on board, my explorations were, perforce, confined to the decks; but

having managed to strike up a clandestine friendship with the various cabin-boys, I returned when the restraining influence was elsewhere, in order to taste the fearful joys of going aloft. Higher and higher I would ascend, while no objection was made, until I could touch the gilt ball at the top of the mast. By and by I even assisted to tie up a sail that had been shaken out on a yard to dry.

With what immense, though secret, satisfaction I made my way home after the first of these expeditions from *terra firma*! I felt that I was already more than half a sailor, and upon the road I ordered at least half a dozen imaginary foremast hands to "belay there," and to "make fast that rope." I felt myself already entitled to assume something of the rolling gait which was one of the manly characteristics I had noticed in the sailors at Sea-lock. I did not mind, either, that my hands and clothes were considerably besmeared with tar from the rigging. Secretly I rather preferred them so, as a means of proving to my companions my familiarity with things nautical.

At home I had prudently determined to say nothing meanwhile about my new adventures,

lest I should be forbidden to go again to the port. But my mother's quick eye observed the tar upon my jacket, and she exclaimed—"Dear me, boy! what made you climb over newly-tarred railings?" Whereupon, my vanity overcoming my prudence, I told her that the tar was not got from railings, but from the rigging of the "Susan Grey" when I was "going aloft to furl topsails."

A moment after the words were out of my mouth I wished that I had kept my secret, such a strange anxious look came into my mother's face. Indeed, had she made any objection just then it might have altogether stopped my aspirations after a seafaring life, for I was very fond of my mother. But she contented herself with ascertaining if I had been at Sea-lock that day, and though she looked grieved a little, I thought, she said no more to me on the subject. At the moment my heart smote me, and I was very near throwing my arms about my mother's neck and telling her I would not go down to Sea-lock again. But in a little while I made up my mind that mothers were all like that, being afraid their boys might be shipwrecked or drowned. Perhaps, too, my

mother thought I was too young to go to sea ; but I felt sure that if I were once a sailor, and had on a pilot jacket and gilt buttons, she would be quite pleased and proud of me. I soon, therefore, forgot the anxious look she had given me.

On Monday I took a holiday (without leave) from school. I had had quite enough schooling, I felt sure ; and, since I was going to be a sailor, there was no sense in learning Latin. So, about a mile from our house, I hid my books behind a hedge, and took the shortest road for Sea-lock.

Saturday's exploit, and the forbearance of my mother, had given me courage, and I had determined to make a bold effort to further my plans. The "Susan Grey," I knew, would still be in port, and as her captain appeared to be a very kind, and pleasant man, I thought I would fare well on board his vessel. I therefore determined to let him know that I wished to become a sailor, and to ask him to take me as his cabin-boy.

My opportunity was easily found, for Captain Williams was just then superintending the stowage of some cargo on the deck of his vessel. He greeted me pleasantly when he caught sight of

me on the quay, and very soon I was on his deck.

Full of boldness inspired by the sight of the sea, and by my sailor-like surroundings, I went up to the captain at once, touched my cap as I had noticed the seamen do, and asked him if he wanted a cabin-boy. He smiled a little as he turned to look at me, and said, "Why do you ask that?" "Because," I answered, "I would like to be a sailor." Seeing him look at me more earnestly, I added, "I know my father does not wish it, but if you would agree to take me, I am sure he would come round."

For a moment I was left in suspense, for the captain had to give some rather rough orders to a seaman close by, but when he turned again he asked me, somewhat irrelevantly I thought, whether we had a master chimney-sweep in our town. I answered, however, that I believed we had. "Then go," said he gravely, "and get him to take you as an apprentice, for I can assure you it will prove a much better business for you than being a sailor."

This was a disappointment, and I was a great deal discouraged by the rebuff. But I was not altogether disheartened. My only fear was that Captain Williams might let my uncle know what

I had been asking, and that it might reach my father's ears.

Before this could happen I determined to make another effort. Another ship, whose captain I had come to know, was lying in port. I made my way to him, and put the same question, "Would he take me as a cabin-boy?" Rather unkindly, I thought, he smiled at my request. "Do you know Jack Ketch?" he said. I foresaw the answer. Jack Ketch was the hangman, and I could hardly be supposed to have personal acquaintance with him, but I answered, with sinking hopes, that I had heard of him. "Well," said Captain Hardy, "I would advise you to go and see if Jack Ketch wants an assistant, rather than think of going to sea."

Thoroughly dispirited, I returned home. It was not nearly so easy as I had expected to get a berth on board ship; and my hopes of becoming a sailor seemed as far as ever from being realised. Worst of all, I was nearly certain that my father would hear in a day or two of the efforts I had been making, and I feared he might do something dreadful, perhaps even apprentice me to the chimney-sweep, as Captain Williams had advised.

Nothing, however, was said at home that week. On the Tuesday I had been thrashed by the schoolmaster for playing truant; and my little sister, in her distress, had let my mother know. But still not a word was said at home, and I began to think the whole danger was over. The thrashing I did not mind. Indeed it made me quite a hero in the sight of my schoolfellows, when they knew my truant day had been spent in visiting ships' captains. Gaining courage from this silence, I determined to speak to my father again before long, urging my exploits aloft as proof of my fitness for going to sea. If he would not help to get me a berth, I made up my mind to go on board as a stowaway—a favourite plan with the heroes in some of the stories I had read.

Before I had quite settled how I should broach the subject, however, for I was a little afraid of my father, a most unexpected thing happened.

One evening I was told my father wished to see me in the parlour. He usually sat there at night, reading the paper by the fire, or enjoying a chat and a glass of punch with some friend.

Upon this occasion I found him with George Ford, a cousin of his own, and captain of a small coasting vessel trading from Sea-lock. My mother

was there too, and I felt that something important was about to happen. My father's first words put me out of suspense. "Well, George," my father used Captain Ford's Christian name, by right of cousinship, "this is the boy who wishes to go to sea. Do you think he would be of any use to you?"

I had often admired Captain Ford. He was a splendid-looking man, tall and stalwart; and, dressed as was the fashion in these days, in heavy blue cloth and tall black beaver hat, he was my ideal of a sailor. So, now that there was a chance of his taking me as his apprentice, I was all excitement, and my greatest fear was that he might refuse. But the Captain made no difficulty in the matter. Perhaps he had been spoken to on the subject before my entrance. He only said that the "Lady Leith" sailed on a certain date, and if I would join her on that date he would give me a trial on his next voyage. Of course, he stipulated I should have to work on board just like the other men.

Of course. I did not wish anything else. I was delighted, and I told him I had already some idea of seamanship, having assisted to take in a topsail down at Sea-lock. "Very well," he

said, "you will get plenty of work to do when we get to sea." Then I hurried away, overjoyed, to tell all my friends, particularly Bob Rennie (who became nearly green with envy), and my little sister Ebe, who cried for fear that I should be drowned.

All this was very satisfactory. I had all at once become quite important. I did not require to go to school any more; and my companions looked on me with increased awe and respect. So I polished my jack-knife in preparation for possible shipwreck, and for "cutting away the davits," and I kept expressing fears to my mother that she would not have my "sea-togs" ready in time.

II.

THE eagerly hoped-for day arrived, and at last I was actually about to become a sailor. The woollen underclothing, about which my mother had been busied, was finished in time after all, and had been rolled up in bundles like those I had seen other seamen carrying. I had been provided, besides, with a stout pilot jacket,

decorated with brass buttons down the front, and though there was no need to start for Sea-lock till the afternoon, I had worn it all morning, and impatiently awaited the hour of departure.

But when the moment for bidding good-bye actually arrived; when my little sister Ebe began to cry, and my mother came to the door-step to kiss me, I confess I felt a lump rise in my throat. I felt that I should like to throw my arms about my mother's neck, and tell her I would stay beside her after all. If she had said a word at that moment, I believe I should have turned back gladly enough and given up all thoughts of going to sea. But, though I saw a tear glisten on her eyelash, she made no sign, only taking me in her arms and kissing me more than once as she bade good-bye. So I had to swallow the choking in my throat as well as I could, and start for the port.

Sandy Waugh, the son of one of my father's workmen, had been deputed to carry my bundles for me down to Sea-lock, and as I marched out of our town with this attendant, and felt the increased awe and respect with which he regarded

me owing to the step I was taking, I soon recovered my high spirits, and enjoyed the importance of my position. My knowledge of seamanship seemed to impress Sandy very much, and as he asked me what I would do at sea in one or other emergency, I imparted to him the particulars I had gathered from the "Cruise of the Midge," "Robinson Crusoe," and "Tom Cringle's Log." In this way, before we had reached the port, I had instructed my follower in quite a number of details of seamanship; and when I finally arrived at my destination, an opportunity almost immediately occurred for showing Sandy my practical acquaintance with nautical matters. Before the vessel had left the basin where she was moored, and while Sandy was watching proceedings with intense interest from the quay, some of the men were ordered aloft to unfurl sails, and I snatched the chance of going up along with them. That, I believe, was the proudest moment of my life.

When at last we were fairly under way, I was ordered to my work about the deck. My first command, on coming on board, had not been very pleasant. It was to search out the dilatory sailors from the neighbouring public-houses. But

now, I promised myself, my work would really be that of a seaman. The vessel was only a small coaster trading to Newcastle, and there was no berth for me on board, so I was told to carry my bundles down to the captain's cabin, where I must roost as well as I could on one of the lockers.

When I came on deck again, the "Lady Leith" was standing out from the harbour. Except upon a single trip to the other side of the narrow frith, I had never been so far from land before, and I began to realise the glory of being actually at sea. The blue waters around, the big sails drawing overhead, the spars and ropes creaking as they swung, all filled me with exultation. From this feeling I was recalled suddenly, however, by being told to lend a hand in washing the decks. This was a dirty proceeding, in which I was considerably wetted, and when it was over I was put upon the captain's watch, just then beginning, which would be on duty till midnight.

Now, never before in my life had I been out of bed after ten o'clock at night, and though at first I thought it fine—just the sort of thing I had read about—to be "told off for the first watch," I presently began to feel very tired and

sleepy. After the excitement of leaving home in the morning, there had been the long tramp down to Sea-lock, and since I came on board I had been kept constantly padding about the deck. As eleven o'clock approached, therefore, I was all but asleep upon my feet, and would have been glad to curl up in any corner for a nap. The men on the watch along with me, however, seemed determined that I should be kept awake, for somehow I could not escape them for five minutes. Besides all this, though we were in the month of July, the night was bitterly cold, and, worn out with fatigue, and shivering in the chilly wind that swept down upon the deck from the sails, I soon began to feel very miserable.

I do not know what hour it would be, when, goaded by utter wretchedness, I formed the bold resolve of appealing to the captain.

There he was, his stately form distinctly visible as he kept pacing back and forward upon the narrow quarter-deck, but it required some courage to go up to him. I could not help feeling that some change had occurred in the captain's aspect towards me. In my father's house he had always seemed very pleasant,

apparently the kindest and most attractive of men; but since I came on board, beyond the briefest of greetings, he had taken no notice of me at all. It was therefore with some trepidation that I approached him now. Impelled by utter misery, however, I at last intercepted his walk, and rather tremulously bespoke his attention.

"Captain," I said, "I think I am sick; may I go down stairs?"

The great man glanced at me sternly, and answered in a gruff voice, which sent my heart down to my heels, "Away! I shall know better when you are sick."

This quite took my breath away, and I began to be frightened at finding that the line of duty was to be drawn so tightly. Terribly crestfallen, I slunk away forward, and, more dead than alive, waited for the tardy hour when I should be free to go below. That hour at last arrived, and, scarcely able to stand owing to weariness, cold, and sleep, I stumbled down the cabin stairs, and, throwing myself on the locker, which, with the captain's sea-coat for a mattress, was to serve me for a bed, in a moment I was dead asleep.

Scarcely had I done this, it seemed, when

some one began shaking me, saying it was four o'clock, and my watch must turn out. Immensely surprised, and sorely grieved as I was at the necessity, there was nothing for it but to tumble up on deck, and go on duty again.

But a change had come over the scene. Morning was just breaking on the horizon, and, boy as I was, I was greatly impressed by its magnificence. I had never in my life been so early astir, and as I still, as a matter of fact, remained free from any qualms of sea-sickness, I forgot my weariness for a time in the novelty of the situation. Besides, I was sent to the forward part of the vessel to keep a look-out, and as there was nothing just then requiring a very careful watch, I found immense interest in exploring the odd corners of the fore-castle.

Presently, as I peered down the hatchway there, into the seamen's quarters, I espied a hammock swinging without an occupant. What could be more delightful, I thought, than to enjoy a few minutes' swing in such a contrivance, especially as I began to feel my weariness returning. There was no one near to object, so I stole down the hatchway, climbed into the hammock, and,

before I had been swinging many moments, fell fast asleep.

I suppose I must have been there for a couple of hours when the owner of the hammock shook me roughly out of his property, and, with a hearty cuff, sent me again on deck.

There a new wonder met my sight. The wind had fallen, the sea was beautifully quiet, and in the calm water all about the ship there were hundreds of black objects tumbling curiously. In the greatest amazement, I asked a sailor who was standing by why they had been throwing all these horse-collars overboard. But my dignity was immensely shocked when the man burst into a great roar of laughter, and proceeded to tell his comrades how I had mistaken porpoises for horse-collars.

Until now, attracted by the novelty of the situation, I had paid little attention to the fare provided for the crew on board ship. But presently, my appetite being sharpened by the keen sea air, when the captain had finished breakfast, I was glad to be told to go below and have mine. Here a new and unpleasant experience awaited me. On the table, floating on a greenish liquid like verdigris, were salt

herrings, which, when tasted, seemed to rasp the skin off the palate. The rest of the breakfast consisted of sea biscuits, hard as leather, and coffee, without milk, sweetened with dirty molasses.

All this was somewhat of a change from the white bread and butter, fresh eggs, and fish, even from the much scorned porridge and milk, of home. Nevertheless, under pressure of hunger, I could not afford to be particular, and perforce made a meal of the sorry fare provided, little anticipating the consequences which were soon to follow.

Hardly had I gone on deck again when the vessel shipped a wave, and, as I had been placed on duty forward in the most likely spot for it, I was drenched to the skin. This I did not much mind. Was it not the baptism to that fine, free, roving life upon which I had just entered? But the wind had freshened, and during the next few hours the little vessel kept plunging unpleasantly in the choppy waves of the sea that was rising.

I had just begun to feel a curious tilting sensation at the pit of my stomach, when I was ordered below again for dinner.

It was with strong repugnance that I faced the greasy broth which formed the first part of the meal. Nevertheless I made shift to get it down. It would never do, I resolved, to show the white feather so soon. But the tough salt beef which followed was different from anything I had ever encountered, and quite beyond my powers. At this point my feelings entirely overcame my resolution. I rushed upon deck and made for the nearest lee scupper. There could be no question now as to the trouble; I was seasick, and very ill indeed. For the remainder of the voyage I did not care though the ship should go to the bottom of the sea, and my sailing be ended for ever. The anguish of the following hours was something awful. I tried to drag myself down the companion-way to my locker, and all I remember afterwards is the lying at full length on the cabin floor, with a ship's bucket beside me.

When I awoke, a good many hours afterwards, I felt better, though very weak and sore. The horrible plunging motion of the ship had ceased, and we seemed to be in calm water. Then I saw through the cabin port-hole what appeared to be a quay with

people standing upon it; and presently someone, coming down to the cabin, told me we had arrived at Newcastle.

III.

ONE effect of my late sickness was that it brought me a kindly word from the mate on coming to the deck, and this, the first kindness I had received on board, greatly gave me heart again. I would willingly have immolated myself for that mate if he had expressed the least desire to be obliged in such a way at the moment, and I was his faithful slave ever after.

When it was discovered that I was well and on my feet again, I was set to all the duties of a cabin-boy. This included a good deal of menial service. I had to help the cook in the galley when required, and had to lend a hand in tidying-up the cabin with its berths. Though I had scarcely bargained for the scraping of pots and the making of beds, I did not much mind these drawbacks, since I had also the glory and excitement of sharing in the general work of the ship. From six o'clock in the

morning till six at night I helped the men to get the cargo out, directing the sling lines, or lending a hand at the winch.

But presently the fatigue and monotony of this toil began to affect me, the more so as I had never before done a day's work in my life. And in the evenings, when the men left the ship, and by harbour regulations all lights had to be put out, I felt very lonely and in want of amusement. Besides this, I was not too well fed. I had to take my food with the crew, and though, as a growing boy, I was troubled with an insatiable appetite, I could not overcome my loathing of the fare provided. The remembrance of my former sufferings after partaking of the bilious coffee and treacle, with their villainous adjuncts, completely prevented my enjoyment of those delicacies; and yet they were the only provender available. At this point, probably, I should have starved altogether, had I not been able to buy some fresh herrings from a woman on the quay, with a little money my mother had put into my hand at parting. These I prevailed upon the cook secretly to prepare for me; and upon them and the hard sea biscuits and suet dumpling, which every day

formed part of the ship's *menu*, I contrived to exist.

All this, before long, as in the case of the Prodigal Son, began to make me think of my father's house. In spite of assurances to myself that I was enjoying the sea life very well, I could not help remembering that this was hardly the sort of thing I had pictured; and more than once I caught myself thinking, with a twinge of regret, of the clean and comfortable meals at home. A still worse experience, however, was in store for me.

As soon as the ship's cargo was discharged, she was unmoored from the quay and floated down to a wharf attached to some char-kilns, in order to take on board a quantity of the dirty stuff heaped there. Here, in a few hours, all my sailor-ward aspirations were well-nigh choked out of me. As the grimy cargo was shot down into the hold, the thick, black dust that rose from it covered the entire ship. During the days when we remained there, eyes, ears, and clothes were filled with this irritating powder. It penetrated every part of the vessel, and even in the food I felt it constantly grind between my teeth. Life, under these

circumstances, became an absolute misery; and these few days under the dust of the coal-shoot utterly disenchanted me of my notions regarding seafaring life.

On one of the days, to be sure, I had an adventure which made me feel something of a hero. It was Sunday, and a few of the men, crossing the river in search of amusement, took me with them to look after the boat. While I waited, a small crowd of boys gradually gathered on shore, and, from teasing me with such nicknames as "Scotty!" "Scotty!" at length went so far as to attempt to take possession of the boat. I had paid little attention to their nicknames, but the attempt to storm my position roused my wrath. Recalling the prowess of Sir William Wallace against the Southerners, and believing, as did every boy in our town, that any one Scotsman was more than a match for half-a-dozen English, I thought this my chance, and made a sudden sally. Whether it was that they were surprised by the unexpectedness of the attack, I do not know, but the entire crowd beat an immediate retreat, and I was left victor on the field. Their subsequent bombardment in the distance I treated with disdain, and triumph-

antly stayed by my post till relieved by the returning sailors. This adventure delighted me immensely, as it was something like the stories of boat attacks I had read. But another day under the calcined dust of the coal-shoot entirely annihilated my heightened spirits.

At last, however, to my intense relief, the loading was completed; the ship then was warped out from the wharf and allowed to drift down the river.

In the mouth of the Tyne there is a bar, which, when the weather is stormy and the wind from the north-east, is somewhat apt to "make history." There had been a thick fog all morning, and I had been hugely pleased with the task set me, that of blowing through the fog-horn, which I had often looked at with longing as it hung in the companion-way. But the fog had lifted. We were just crossing the bar into the open sea, and I was congratulating myself upon having left the dirty river with its coal-pits and char-dust behind, when I suddenly again felt horribly sick.

The sickness, however, this time only lasted a few hours, and when it wore off, I might have been tolerably happy but for a new misery that

had seized upon me. Since I left home I had had no word from the people there. I had never in my life before been so long away; and I now began to think that something dreadful might have happened in my absence. My mother's health, I knew, was very delicate; I had often seen her ill in bed; and now I began to be haunted by the terrible fear that she might die while I was away. To this fear was added by my accusing conscience the thought that my headstrong determination to become a sailor might have helped to bring about her end, and as the days passed on, my misery, on this account, gathered in intensity.

The fact of the captain's indifference had by this time ceased to have any effect upon me. Indeed, I had made up my mind that his was the regular manner of ships' captains at sea. Moreover, I had made a new friend in the person of the mate. I was now on his watch, and as he always spoke very kindly to me, I came to admire him very much indeed. On deck during the long hours of the night he entertained me with many stories of the fearful perils he had encountered on the ocean; always, by the way, expressing his bitter repentance of

ever having become a sailor. Again and again, in these friendly talks, he urged upon me earnestly never to think of choosing the seafaring life, setting before me, with all the force born of experience, the miseries of life at sea compared with the comforts of life ashore.

I scarcely needed such evidence by this time to convince me that I had made a mistake in choosing to be a sailor. Encouraged further by the mate's kindness, I ventured to tell him of my fears regarding my mother. At this he expressed the greatest sympathy with me, though it was quite possible, he said, that my leaving home against her wishes might have had some ill effect upon my mother's health.

Struck to the heart by these words, I felt abjectly miserable, and presently I informed him of my contrition; whereupon he gravely pointed out how wicked I had been, knowing my mother was in such poor health, to have distressed her by going to sea; and he finished by advising me to make for home at once upon reaching port, and never again to think of becoming a sailor.

This advice I fervently determined to follow, and accordingly made up my belongings into

two bundles, ready to start the moment we should touch land. The mate was quite aware of my resolution; accordingly, as if that fact left him free to tell the truth, on the last night of the voyage the burden of all his talk with me was such a presentation of a sailor's life as almost made the blood curdle in my veins.

It could be no wonder, therefore, that in the morning, when the ship was approaching her destination—a small village on the shore of the firth farthest from our town—I appeared on deck with a bundle under each arm.

"Hillo!" cried the captain as he espied me, "What are you up to now?"

I replied dejectedly that I was going home.

"Going home!" he cried, "and how do you expect to get home from this place?"

I answered that I believed by taking the road "over that hill," in sight, I would come to a ferry which would carry me across the firth, after which I could walk home.

The captain looked immensely amused. From his elevation of six feet and odds I must have appeared a very small individual to tackle the length of road I had set my mind to. Noticing,

however, from my face that I was in earnest, he asked if I had any money to take me home. I had to confess that I had none.

"Then how," he asked, "do you mean to get across the ferry?"

I could not say. The fact is I had never considered this at all, having forgotten everything in the absorbing desire to get home and see my mother. Taking pity upon me, however, the captain gave me a sixpence, and telling me to leave my bundles on board, promised to have them sent home for me.

The bantering of the sailors which I had next to undergo made me feel somewhat ashamed of my change of mind; but the finishing touch was put to my resolution presently, upon the hatches being taken off, and my beholding again the grimy cargo of char, whose embarkation had already caused me so much misery.

Without further delay I hastened ashore, and notwithstanding the strong temptations of a fair which was being held that day in the little seaport at which we had arrived, I forthwith set out across the hill for the ferry. There I made at once for the unwieldy steamer, which carried vehicles as well as passengers

over the firth; and took a seat beside some kindly-looking country women who were carrying their butter and eggs to market. The friendship of these women presently stood me in good stead, for the collector coming round for the fares demanded sixpence from me. Now, this was the whole sum I had to carry me home. I therefore endeavoured to get him to take half-fare, telling him I was not yet twelve years of age. At this he made some difficulty, appearing to doubt my assertion, and would probably have made off with my entire capital had it not been for one of the good women, who, probably taking pity upon my loneliness, admonished him with, "Tak' the siller, man! Can ye no see the laddie's tellin' the truth?"

At the southern terminus of the ferry another fair was going on; and, in spite of my anxiety to reach home, the temptations of this proved too strong for me, especially as I had money in my pocket. One penny was spent at a barrow where gentlemen were allowed to shoot for nuts. A sweetmeat stall consumed my second coin, and a peep at a "living skeleton," inside a gorgeously emblazoned caravan, made off with my third.

During the whole of my voyage I had

been entirely denied amusement. It had now, therefore, all the attraction of novelty, and I lingered for hours amid the glories of the fair. Long after I had any hope of gaining access to the originals within the booths, I found delight in gazing at the splendid works of art outside, one of which, I remember, depicted a reduced nobleman (in blue bathing-pants and pink fleshings) preparing to swallow a three-foot rapier, while another portrayed a young lady (in gold bracelets and muslin petticoats) inspecting, with alarming familiarity, the condition of a lion's gums.

Lost in admiration of these wonders, it was late afternoon before I remembered that I had still a long way to travel. Then suddenly my fears regarding my mother returned to mind with redoubled force, and I became all eagerness to set off for home. No one whom I asked, however, could point out my road. The best direction I could get was from a good-natured woman, who answered my question with an expression of astonishment and pity. All she could tell me was that if I kept inland along the shore of the firth I must arrive in the neighbourhood of home. This advice I followed,

and a weary walk it led me; for the indentations of the coast-line doubled the distance, and in the absence of a road I had many a rough scramble over bog and dyke.

Presently I began to be dreadfully hungry. The sweets I had purchased at the fair proved to be anything but strength-sustaining, and the biscuits I had brought from the ship had been long ago nibbled away. Worse than all, as darkness was falling thunder began to growl in the sky overhead, and with a sudden flash of lightning the storm burst upon me in all its fury. In a few minutes I was wet to the skin. Trembling as I stumbled along, and half-blinded by the lurid glare of the lightning, I felt sure that God was at last going to punish me for my wantonness in leaving home. As crash after crash of the thunder exploded overhead, I recalled the solemn reproaches of my friend the mate, and feeling sure that my end was at hand, I said all the prayers I knew, and vowed the greatest docility for ever afterwards, if only I were allowed to escape punishment this time.

At last the storm wore itself out, and footsore, soaked, and utterly dispirited, I was trudging wearily along, when, to my joy, I struck the

road between Sea-lock and my native town. Plucking up heart somewhat at this, but feeling woefully weak from want of food, I somehow got over the last two miles, and arrived at my father's door.

With an access of terror I glanced at the windows. But the blinds were still up, and my heart gave a great bound of relief. Rushing into the house, I sought my mother. She was in the kitchen at the time, baking, her hands white with flour, but at my step she looked up with a little cry—"My laddie!" and, opening her arms, took me to her breast. As for me, throwing my arms round her, I became suddenly and entirely happy in the knowledge that all my fears and anxiety had been groundless. All my hardships, my hunger, wet, and weariness I forgot in the joy of finding myself once more beside her; and it needed no prophet to foretell that I would never again seek to go to sea against her wishes. Before long I was fed, dried, and put to bed, and to this day I remember how very pleasant it was to be once again safely tucked in by those kind and dear hands.

Not till long afterwards did I discover that the whole affair had been a plot made up to

cure me of my passion for the sea. The captain and mate, both being in the secret, had played their parts to perfection, and both, for their services, were suitably douceured by my father. A longer voyage in a larger ship might have had a different result, but the miseries of a coal voyage to Newcastle in a coasting schooner succeeded in disenchanting me entirely and for ever of all hankering after the life of a sailor. For long I had a bad time of it among my elder brothers and sisters. Sly allusions to my unfortunate trip kept cropping up, and "stickit sailor" was a nickname employed for many a day to stir my wrath. But by and by I lived this down, and again and again, amid the troubles of after life, there has been profit in looking back upon that first voyage, which, at least in the capacity of foremast hand, proved also to be my last.

A WANDERING PIPER.

I HAD secured my lodging three days before, but had not specified the exact time at which I should take possession. So it happened that when I did arrive my landlady herself was out shopping. Her father, however, showed me my room, lit the gas, and, as it was a warm summer night, threw open the windows.

The house was high up, the fourth story, I think, in one of those tenements peculiar to Edinburgh, above a thoroughfare not far from the University. From the street below rose the lazy hum of the foot traffic, with the occasional rumble of a car, and by craning one's neck a little it was just possible to see the lights of the shops and the sauntering passengers on the opposite pavement. To judge from the various photographs of young men in gown and trencher which adorned my mantelshef, the most frequent occupants of the rooms were college students.

There was not much else of interest in the room,

so, by way of settling myself in my new quarters, I proceeded leisurely to unpack my baggage.

When my landlady at last returned, and came in to exchange a few words of greeting and make some necessary arrangements, her quick woman's instinct for noticing details must have shown her the bagpipe chanter which for safety I had unpacked from other luggage and laid on the table. At any rate she had not long retired when there was another knock at the room door, and, upon what Allan Ramsay would have called "a richt thieveless errand," her father again came in.

I could study him more leisurely now; a hale old fellow—eighty-one he afterwards told me he was, but I would never have guessed as much—a little bent in the shoulders, with an ingenuous twinkle under the bushy eyebrows, and in speech the peculiar, kindly accent of the far north.

After a casual remark or two, I saw his eyes make their way to the chanter.

"Do ye play an instrument?" he asked.

I explained that I was beginning to learn the bagpipes, and that this was my practising chanter.

"How do ye play it?" he said, taking it up. "Is it this way?" and he arranged his fingertips on the holes.

"No," I answered, "you lay your fingers across the stick, so."

At his request I played a tune or two. There was a curious smile about his eyes.

"Ay," he exclaimed, with a sigh, when I had quite done, "ye've a lot to learn."

Then he left the room, and presently came back with the most disreputable old practising-chanter I ever set eyes on, a thing with a battered tin tube for a mouthpiece, and a ferrule of discoloured bone for the usual ivory disk at the lower end; and he stood there solemnly beating time on the carpet with his foot, and played on that wretched old stick as I had never heard the chanter played before.

For a minute or two I listened and looked. Then I told him to sit down. He had played the bagpipes for sixty years.

It was not an hour's playing that could exhaust his powers or his stock of "the music." His heart was warm at the discovery of kindred taste and a sympathetic listener. By and by he brought in a small set of reel pipes, his own making, and with always another story and another tune belonging to it, one o'clock struck from the town steeples before we parted that night.

Gradually, afterwards, as he sat there giving me an occasional lesson in the dusk of the evenings, while it was still hardly dark enough to light the gas, bits of his history came out, mixed up with tales of the Highlands, stories of pipers and their chiefs, and the occasions of the composing of tunes. He had been a wanderer, evidently, with the restless instinct of the piper race. There were few places in the north that he did not know, and few places regarding which he had no reminiscence to tell. Originally a blacksmith, he had been cut adrift from his native town by grief at the death of his wife and a favourite child, and, finding consolation in his pipes, had taken to playing them in one place after another, apparently for the chief part of his livelihood. Needless to say, he was a clansman to the last drop of his blood. The fact chiefly showed itself in his choice of tunes. Some to his mind were "worth playing," while others, equally stirring and tender to the unbiassed listener, were put contemptuously aside. There "wasna much tune" in one, and he "wadna dirty his pipes" with another.

It was difficult sometimes to extract the particular reason for his aversion, the subject,

perhaps, was too tender. But when an explanation did come out, the tune was generally found to belong to some hostile clan, and to relate to the bitterly remembered incident of some feud centuries old.

He used to ask me, as the lessons progressed, what tune I should like to learn next. One of the first airs I suggested, before I knew he was from Caithness, was the well-known march, "The Campbells are Coming."

"That's a tune I hardly ever play," he said. "There's not much variety in it, to my mind."

He had a modest habit of qualifying his judgments always with the phrase "to my mind."

"There's another tune something like that," he added, by way of amend; "a bonnier tune than it. Do ye ken 'Lord Kenmure's March'?"

And, putting the battered tin mouthpiece to his lips, and fetching a long breath, he blew out the latter air with great spirit and an infinity of grace-notes.

Presently, when he had recovered wind, he volunteered a reminiscence.

"I mind playing that march once," he said. "It was when Sir John Sinclair was newly

marriet, and his bride and him were coming hame to Caithness. The carriage was stoppit at the gates under a fine arch with flowers, and there was an address delivered and a welcome given to Sir John and his young bride. Then I struck up the pipes. I was a bit back, out o' the crowd, standing on a sma' knowe, and when I struck up, I hadna played a bar or so when the editor o' the paper, that was there; cam' running across and grippit me by the shouter. 'What's that ye're playin', man?' cries he. I said it was 'Lord Kenmure's March,' 'Oh, is that it?' he cried; 'I thought it was "The Campbells are Coming."'"

Here was clearly the opportunity for drawing a Highland story from the old fellow.

"Suppose you had been playing 'The Campbells are Coming,' what would have been the harm?"

It was a long story, dating some centuries back. The Earl of Caithness of that day had been immensely rich, owning nearly all the county held by his clansmen in the north. Besides this, Sir John (that earl also was apparently called Sir John) was one of the handsomest men in the country. By the machinations of the earl's enemies at court, however, the Prince of Wales

of the time was induced to test his friendship by borrowing money from him, and Sir John's blank cheque was filled in by these enemies with an enormous sum. In order to meet this demand, as the Prince did not come to his help, Sir John had to sell nearly all his estates. These were bought by Campbell of Breadalbane, who, to make full profit out of the transaction, at once raised all the rents of the territory. Upon this the Sinclairs altogether refused to acknowledge their new superior, and the immediate result was a clan feud. Breadalbane raised his vassals, and marched into the north to enforce his authority. The Sinclairs in a body came to meet him, and for several days the two forces lay watching each other on the opposite banks of a stream.

"Breadalbane was afraid to come to battle," said the old fellow, warming to the climax of his story, "for there was the water before him to cross, and he knew the Sinclairs could fight. But at last he thought on a plan that would give him an advantage. He sent a convoy of wines and brandy so that it should fall into the Sinclairs' hands. The Sinclairs got it, and drank the wines, and at night, when they were all useless and asleep, Breadalbane marched across the river.

And the tune his pipes were playing was 'The Campbells are Coming.'

"The Sinclairs," he added, with a regretful shake of the head, "never got the better o' that night."

The stories of the piper's wanderings in his active years were themselves often curious and interesting enough. It was the mention of a town in the north one night which made him recount perhaps his most characteristic tale.

He had lived in Inverness for some time; did I know Inverness at all?

I could only say that I had passed through Inverness once or twice, though I had stayed frequently with friends in the neighbouring town of Nairn.

Nairn! Did I know Nairn? He had been in Nairn once.

Then came the story. He had been in Nairn over the night playing at a wedding or some similar function, and in the morning, as there was an hour or two to wait, he was passing the time in looking at the shop windows in the main street.

"I had the pipes under my arm," he said, "and was thinking nothing about it, when three

young gentlemen came along the street. They passed me, and then I saw them stop on the pavement a bit away, and speak together a minute, and look at me. At last one o' them cam' back and bade me good-day, and asked me if I wad mind playing for them at a place near hand. I said I had no objections, that I was only waiting on my train for Inverness. So I followed them along the street, and they took me to a bowling-green where there was a match going on. Then I asked them what I was to do. 'Just you walk up and down yonder,' said the one that had spoken to me first, 'and play anything you like.'

"So," he said, "I marched up and down for maybe the greater part o' three-quarters o' an hour, and then the young gentleman cam' to me. They had been making a sort o' collection on the green, and he told me to hold my pocket open, and poured in what they had gathered, coppers and silver, till it was near full.

"I thanked him, and was going away—I had just got outside the gate—when a pleasant-looking gentleman came up and touched my shoulder. 'Would you object to play a little for me, my man?' he said. I said I had no objections, if I

might catch my train that day for Inverness. Then he told me that if I cam' to his house in half an hour he wad get me to play for him. He turned and went a bit down the street, but in a minute he cam' back, and said he had changed his mind. If I could come wi' him now he wad prefer it.

"The gentleman took me," continued the old piper, "to a lawn at the back o' a very fine hoose. 'Now,' says he, 'all I want you to do is to play me two tunes—"The 79th's Farewell to Gibraltar" and "Lochiel's away to France"' (both Cameron tunes, the 79th being the Cameron regiment, and Lochiel the chief of the clan). I played him both of these three times over on the lawn there, and he looked very pleased. 'You've done very well,' he said, 'and now you'll go into the servants' hall and get some dinner.'

"So I went into the hall, and had a very good dinner; and I was just finishing, when a servant came down to say that I wasna to go away before I got some tea. And when I was at my tea the lad cam' back wi' a message from his master, that it wad be a great favour if I wad play a reel for the servants to dance to, before I left. So I set my pipes again and played a reel,

and the servants had a dance. There was one young English footman there that didna ken the steps very weel, and his partner was a trim bit maid. The gentleman, the master o' the house, had come downstairs wi' his friends to look at the dance, and in a second, when he saw this, he had taken the young fellow by the shouthers and turned him aside, and there he footed it himsel' to the blushing lass; and he was the best dancer on the floor.

"When they had had a good reel," said the old fellow, "and were out o' breath, the gentleman cam' over and said he was obliged to me, and gave me a half-sovereign. 'Now,' he said, 'you have time yet to get your train for Inverness.'

"I thanked him for my dinner, and for the half-sovereign, and was coming away. I had got just outside the gate of the place, when I met one of the gentlemen I had seen on the bowling-green in the morning. 'Hillo!' said he, 'you've been here all afternoon? Do you know who it is you've been playing to in there?'

"I said I did not know, but that he was a very pleasant gentleman.

"'Very pleasant no doubt he would be,' answered the bowler. 'That's the brother of Lochiel.'"

MOTIVES AND METHODS OF AUTHORSHIP.

ONE branch of art has been defined by Shakespeare as the holding of a mirror up to nature, and another branch has been described by Matthew Arnold as a criticism of life. Probably because it fulfils both of these definitions, the art of letters possesses a perennial interest alike for the man in the study and the man in the street. In the early periods of society, it is true, the lives of authors seem to have been but little regarded. Almost nothing is known of the personal history of Homer or of Henry the Minstrel. This, however, is most probably owing to the fact that means of record were scanty. At any rate, ever since literature became a popular possession, there has been a living and widespread interest in the circumstances of its production. Indeed, at the present hour it would seem, from the list of contents

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of some periodicals, as if the gossip about authors and their work threatened to absorb a greater attention than the actual work itself. This interest, however, is not altogether an idle matter. The colour of an author's hair, his exact height, and what he eats for breakfast, are not certainly of vital importance. But why a book was written, and how it was written, are points of information which frequently go far to help to a proper understanding of the work. Few therefore will deny that curiosity regarding the circumstances of literary production may be legitimate enough.

Even apart from the light which they throw upon the works to which they refer, the motives which have led to the writing of some books have been in themselves sufficiently romantic and interesting. Of the inception of "Frankenstein," her adaptation to modern life of the ancient story of Prometheus, Mrs Shelley gives an account which, for the sake of the persons concerned in it, cannot but possess a strong claim to regard.

The summer of 1816 was cold and rainy, she records, and was passed by the small but famous party of which she was a member, in the environs of Geneva. In the evenings

the company crowded round a blazing wood-fire, and amused themselves with the reading of some German ghost-stories which happened to fall into their hands. Under the influence of these, Lord Byron suggested that each of the company should write a story of the supernatural. Following up the idea, Byron himself began a story, a fragment of which he printed with his poem "Mazeppa." Shelley made a beginning with some account of an experience of his own early life. And Polidori set to work upon an idea he had of a skull-headed lady, whom, however, he subjected to such dreadful experiences that she was presently unfit for further use, and had to be summarily despatched. Mrs Shelley herself, for lack of a subject, was long in making a start. There were, however, she relates, many and long conversations at that time between Lord Byron and Shelley, at which she was a devout, if silent, listener. At one of these, among other subjects, the poets discussed the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. That talk lasted long into the night, and on going to bed after it, Mrs Shelley declares, she could not sleep. "I saw,"

she declares, "with shut eyes but acute mental vision—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy half-vital motion."

Here was the germ of a story. The dreamer awoke realistically conscious of the horrid spectre standing by her bedside, "opening the curtains and looking down at her with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes;" and that day she began her tale with the words, *It was on a dreary night of November*, making little more than a transcript of the grim terrors of her dream.

Most readers also are familiar with the touching story of the composition of "Rasselas" by Dr Samuel Johnson. Few who read that story would gather from its contents any inkling of the ultimate motive which lay behind the writing. The book contains the elaboration of an ideal, the working out of a theory, and might well have been the occupation of many happy hours. The circumstances of the book's production, however, were sad and grim enough. Johnson's mother had died. It was the year

1759, when the rewards of literature were still most meagre and poor, and though he was already well known as author of "London," the "Life of Savage," and the great Dictionary, Johnson found himself without the means of providing a decent funeral. It appears typical of the solid character of the man that he sat down, heavy no doubt of heart, but with settled purpose. Day and night his pen ran on, sketching his happy valley, and in a single week, it is said, he had produced the story of "Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia."

Much has been said of late years against the writing of novels "with a purpose." These lose in art, it is averred, more than they gain from didactic intention, and it is urged that the discussion of theories should be confined to the more appropriate vehicle of treatise or lecture. Nevertheless, much has been done in this age of ours by novels, and poems too, written "with a purpose."

Sir Walter Besant has written more than one good book of this class, and few will be found to deny that his stories have been excellent as fiction, quite apart from any intention which lay behind it. When purpose in novel-writing is

mentioned, one particular romance occurs to every memory. Besant had seen with pity the misery of East London. He had seen the girls with flat chests and lack-lustre eyes; he had looked at the men, pale and spiritless. Many a mind, before the novelist's, has asked itself the true reason for this state of things; more than one means, such as the farm-colony of General Booth, has since been devised for the cure of it. The conclusion to which the novelist came was that the people lacked happiness. So he set himself to sketch a palace of rational pleasure for them. He bade the world look at these men and girls, and he sketched what might be the effect of a little joy introduced into their lives. Give these girls a little music, a little dancing—give them a lover, he said, and watch the change. Sir Walter Besant wrote "All Sorts and Conditions of Men." He called it "an impossible story," but probably no work has done more to direct attention to the condition of the poor in cities. Its publication brought about an entire fashionable crusade upon the slums; and what is better, by way of practical outcome, the central feature of the story, a People's Palace with all its adjuncts, now rises, not

only in East London, but in many other cities.

Before Walter Besant, in somewhat of the same temper, came Charles Dickens. Prince of humorists as he was, and one of the warmest and kindest of hearts, the author of "David Copperfield" was not the less a master of scathing satire. Again and again his "novels with a purpose" taught society to sympathise with the sufferings of the poor, and more than once these same productions struck a deadly blow at the oppressions of official life and bumbledom. It cannot, perhaps, be said that because of the writings of Dickens the evils of "red-tapeism" have entirely disappeared from Government offices; but there can be no doubt that the delays of law have become infinitely less since the writing of "Little Dorrit."

It is needless, perhaps, to cite instances in which poetry has been written with a distinctly social or political purpose, and has not the less been true poetry for the social or political effect which it has produced. Mrs Browning's "Cry of the Children" undoubtedly helped Lord Shaftesbury to put an end to the child labour in coal-pit and factory which used to prove so

fatal to its victims. And if the misery of the unnumbered London seamstresses toiling and starving under the "sweating system" has not yet been sensibly lightened, it has at least had more eyes of sympathy turned upon it since Hood wrote his heart-moving "Song of the Shirt." Again, on the farther side of the Atlantic, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" promoted to an incalculable extent the Abolitionist feeling; and subsequently the slave-poems of Whittier, and the "Biglow Papers" of Russell Lowell at one and the same time furnished the battle-cry of the Northern movement, and became the master-pieces of their authors.

It is not to be denied, however, that a motive which enters largely into the writing of books, at least nowadays, is the pecuniary one. Literature has become a profession like the other professions, and men are found to enter it for the sake of the loaves and fishes. And probably it may be said with truth that never was literature so well paid as now. It is true that Sir Walter Scott, in the beginning of the century, received large sums for his works; but he was almost the only writer of his time who did so. At the present day, more than a dozen authors might

be named offhand who count on receiving for each work a cheque of at least four figures. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that no really great work was ever produced from this sordid motive alone. There never was a great book written, it has been truly said, without a great enthusiasm behind it.

The mere accidents, however, by which some books have come into public vogue, have been not a little remarkable. "Lorna Doone," for instance, as every one possibly is not aware, threatened for some time to be an utter failure. Notwithstanding its exquisite qualities, it lay for several months all but dead on the publishers' shelves. Then the marriage of the Princess Louise occurred, and the similarity between the name of her husband, the Marquis of Lorne, and that of the heroine of the book, somehow attracted the public eye, with the consequence that the stock of "Lorna Doone" was immediately exhausted, and new editions called for. Sooner or later, however, it can hardly be doubted, the merits of the romance must have been discovered without this adventitious aid, and the book have achieved success upon its intrinsic worth.

Of late years there have been many apparently sudden and phenomenal successes in the arena of authorship, none of which probably has been either quite so sudden or so phenomenal as it appeared. The list includes Mr J. M. Barrie, Mr Rudyard Kipling, Mr Stanley Weyman, and "Ian Maclaren." The case of Mr Barrie is well known. "Auld Licht Idylls" and "A Window in Thrums," with which he achieved success, were by no means the author's first ventures into literature. It came out afterwards that there had been at least one previous volume from his pen, with the ominous title of "Better Dead"; and for long after the fame of "A Window in Thrums" had been assured, a religious weekly kept publishing reprints of articles by the author which had appeared, without attracting notice, years before. Mr Rudyard Kipling, too, seemed to spring suddenly into fame with the production of "Soldiers Three," and some Indian poems and articles in the magazines. But it transpired, upon inquiry and better acquaintance, that his art had been perfected, during years of residence in the East, by much story-writing in the Anglo-Indian journals. Again, Mr Stanley J. Weyman seemed

to leap into sudden renown the other day with the publication of "A Gentleman of France" and "Under the Red Robe." But the reader who looks at the *English Illustrated Magazine* for December 1883, will find proof that quite ten years before that apparently sudden acquisition of fortune and fame, Mr Weyman was perfecting his art and shouldering his way to recognition among the common crowd of storytellers. As for "Ian Maclaren," whether or not his pen has long been practised in the art of deliberate story-telling, it has for half a lifetime, as is well known, had constant practice in moving the emotions of men in a kindred and hardly less literary way.

The truth, indeed, appears to be that success in literature, like success in every other profession, comes even to the ablest men only as the result of long and hard work. When an author, like a comet, bursts suddenly upon the public ken, few take the trouble to reckon up the long years that have gone to the preparation of his brilliance. In the case of Sir Walter Scott, for instance, fame seemed to come with the appearance of his first poem and his first romance, and hardly even yet do people take

time to reflect on the lifetime of preparation of which these works were the flower. Though the work of collecting "The Border Minstrelsy" is sometimes cited as the labour amid which Scott obtained his materials and his inspiration, few remember the translations, prose and poetry, from the German, which were the first practice of his hand; and the world forgets the editing of "Sir Tristrem," and the writing of the "Life of Swift."

Industry and perseverance, "an infinite capacity for taking pains," if they are not indeed genius itself, as has paradoxically been said, form at least the indispensable accompaniments to it. Mr Rider Haggard declares that he writes his books simply by keeping at work on them. And the industry of Mr Rudyard Kipling may be measured by the fact that he is said to have written "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot" seven times over, and then to have made considerable corrections on the proofs. The late Professor Huxley was another writer whose industry in perfecting his literary expression was only rivalled by his genius.

Strikingly contrasted with this necessity for industry have been the personal inclinations of

some conspicuous writers. Thackeray confessed that his besetting sin was laziness: he could never write, he said, till the printer's devil was at his door. The story, again, is told of Dickens, how once in a stationer's shop he was startled by hearing a lady at the counter inquire whether the next number of a certain novel, then appearing in monthly parts, was out yet. Little did the customer guess that the next part of the story was not yet even in existence, and that the gentleman at her elbow, in fact, stood there for the purpose of buying the paper upon which he intended, a few hours later, to write the chapter asked for.

Though the publication of stories in monthly parts by themselves appears to have died out since Dickens's time, publication by instalment in weekly and monthly periodicals appears of late to have taken firmer hold than ever. The method is carried out to still greater extent in France, where even the daily journals set great store on their *feuilletons* of fiction. *Le Petit Journal*, five or six years ago, paid M. Richebourg no less a sum than 80,000 francs, about £3333, for the right to publish "La Dame en Noir" in its *feuilleton*, and the publication was said

to have increased the daily sales of the paper by thirty thousand.

Similar instances, though perhaps scarcely so conspicuous, might be given of the effects of serial publication in this country, where stories managed in this way have been known to raise the circulation of the periodical in which they appeared by ten and twenty thousand at a time.

The necessities of such a method of publication must sometimes, one should suppose, do no small harm to the construction of a romance. It can hardly help the artistic proportion and evolution of a story when the author is aware that a climax of some kind must be wrought to a point in every chapter. The method, however, has more than one advantage, which, from the writer's point of view, may be held to compensate to some extent for this drawback. It allows an opportunity, during the progress of the story through the press, for an author to learn betimes the popular opinion of his work—an opportunity which several novelists have not been slow to profit by.

A well-known recent instance of this was Mr Kipling's treatment of the conclusion of

"The Light that Failed." When the story appeared in a magazine, the popular voice declared against its termination, a happy one, as untrue to probabilities, and a concession to convention. And when the tale appeared later in volume form, the public found that the ending had been changed, and was now, with more truth to art and nature, of a tragic cast.

But an even better instance is recorded of the late Anthony Trollope. While a story of his was running through one of the magazines, the novelist one day happened to dine at a provincial hotel. In the smoking-room after dinner he overheard some young men discussing his story, which was attracting a good deal of attention. As a whole, they praised it highly; but one point they agreed unanimously to condemn. In the tale there was a certain troublesome old lady who, they said, and they gave their reasons, had become entirely unbearable to the reader, a fact which they were surprised the author had not by this time found out. Trollope, the story goes, listened for a time in silence, but at last he got up, walked over to the amateur critics on the hearthrug, and made them a profound bow. "Gentlemen," he said, "I beg to introduce myself:

I am the author of the story you have been good enough to discuss. I have listened to your criticism, and have heard you condemn Mrs ——. I am sorry she is disagreeable to you, but she shall be so no longer, for I shall go home and kill her off at once." And he did it.

To this opportunity of alteration and correction there falls to be added the further advantage that the serial publication of a story frequently proves, to the author, the most profitable. And the pecuniary return is what to some people, authors not excluded, appears the final test of art.

LITERARY AUTHENTICITY.

I.

WERE there such an institution as an assize for the regular trial of literary questions, its records would contain some cases of curious interest. When the instances of disputed authorship of conspicuous works alone are considered, there appears to be almost reason enough for the establishment of such a tribunal. Taken together, and even leaving out of account such extravagant indictments as the theory of Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare's plays, it is surprising to discover how many questions of disputed authenticity have occurred in our national literature. Tried, as they have been, only before the informal bar of public opinion, with its constant admission of irrelevancies, informalities, and arguments vague and inept, these present a mass of opposing briefs worthy the effort of some academic authority to gather

together and reduce to order. Of such questions, curiously enough, the literature of Scotland exhibits a much longer array than that of England, and it is of some interest to note that the majority of them occurred during the period in which the capital of Scotland was earning for itself the proud title of the Modern Athens.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century Scotland led the way towards recognition of the neglected beauties of ancient popular poetry. For this service the chief honour is due to Allan Ramsay, whose collections, "The Evergreen," and "The Tea-table Miscellany," published in 1724, first awakened the general interest of the country in the treasures of its national literature. It was during the rise of this wave of popular interest that the earliest case of disputed authenticity occurred.

"Hardyknute, a Fragment," was published in 1719 by James Watson, the King's printer in Edinburgh, in a neat folio edition of twelve pages, of which a copy is still preserved in the Advocates' Library. An apparently earlier, less finished edition, but without date, in eight pages duodecimo, was in the beginning of this century

in the possession of David Laing, the well-known editor of Scottish poetry. This ballad Lady Wardlaw of Pitreavie averred she had discovered written on shreds of paper used for the bottoms of weaving clues, and it was generally believed to be a genuine antique poem. Men of such literary taste as Lord-President Forbes and Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland, so little doubted its authenticity as to become contributors to the expense of printing the folio edition. It was also included in his "Evergreen" by Allan Ramsay, who altered the orthography of the composition so as to set it forth in what he supposed must be its original antique dress. In this guise the ballad became very popular, as indeed from its intrinsic merit it quite deserved to be. Its opening reminds one of the finest among our national folk-songs:—

"Stately stepped he east the wa',
And stately stepped he west;
Full seventy years he now had seen,
With scarce seven years of rest."

The supposition, too, that the ballad referred to an episode of the battle of Largs, fought in 1263, lent it a charm of historic interest, and

gave ground for considering it perhaps the oldest composition in the Scottish vernacular.

It was not till 1767 that the public was disillusioned. In that year Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, himself the editor of a well-known collection of ancient poetry, communicated for the second edition of Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," some new light upon the authorship. Some suspicion, it appeared, having arisen in the minds of competent judges regarding the antiquity of the verses, Lady Wardlaw had been questioned, and had in a manner acknowledged them to be her own. Being desired to furnish proof of her authorship, she had produced for the poem two fresh concluding stanzas which were not included in the original version.

This, it might have been expected, would set the matter at rest. Further complications, however, were still to ensue. In his "Scottish Tragic Ballads" in 1781, Pinkerton printed an amended version of "Hardyknute," including a second part to complete the story, and alleging his indebtedness for the improved version and the additional stanzas to "the memory of a lady in Lanarkshire."

A little later, in his "Select Scottish Ballads" (1783) and in his "Ancient Scottish Poems" (1786), Pinkerton acknowledged the added second part to be his own composition; but regarding the original poem, on the authority of an alleged communication from Lord Hailes, he produced a new theory of authorship. Sir John Bruce, Lady Wardlaw's brother-in-law, he said, had averred his finding of the MS. in an old vault at Dunfermline, and, to screen his own connection with the composition, had induced Lady Wardlaw to become its foster-mother. This new theory Pinkerton succeeded in foisting upon Bishop Percy, who adopted it in the fourth edition of his "Reliques," attributing the authorship of the ballad directly to Sir John Bruce.

So the matter stood till 1830, when in the literary correspondence of Pinkerton, published by Mr Dawson Turner, was found a letter from Lord Hailes, dated 2nd December 1785, explicitly denying the new allegation published in his name, and reaffirming the authorship of Lady Wardlaw. Lord Hailes was himself of opinion that the foundation of the ballad might be ancient, and he quoted William Thomson, the Scottish musician, who published the "Orpheus

Caledonius" in 1733, as declaring that he had heard portions of it repeated in his infancy, before Lady Wardlaw's copy was heard of.

Notwithstanding this opinion of an able critic in his time, and the somewhat vague statement of Thomson, "Hardyknute" is now universally believed to be modern. The assertion of the fact by Lady Wardlaw's daughter was hardly needed to set the question at rest. In the light of recent knowledge, indeed, it appears surprising that the ballad should ever have been considered antique; the few really ancient words which it contains are mostly used in quite a modern sense, and the whole composition breathes a certain undefinable literary air entirely foreign to the genuine ballad of antiquity. Nevertheless, however questionable the original method of its introduction to the public, "Hardyknute" is well worthy the place it holds in our national ballad collections. In his "Minstrelsy" Sir Walter Scott called it "a most spirited and beautiful imitation of the ancient ballad," and on the fly-leaf of his copy of Ramsay's "Evergreen" was found written — "'Hardyknute' was the first poem I ever learned, the last that I shall forget."

Macpherson's "Ossian," perhaps the subject of the greatest literary strife in the eighteenth century, will at once occur to the mind of every reader in this connection. This famous question also owes its existence to the rage of our ancestors for the antiquities of our national literature; but, strange to say, whereas in Lady Wardlaw's case, the public fell to an extreme of credulity, the balance of the popular mind regarding "Ossian" seems rather to have inclined towards an unreasoning disbelief.

On the bowling-green of Moffat, in the summer of 1759, the Rev. John Home, author of the well-known tragedy of "Douglas," met James Macpherson, a young Highland schoolmaster, travelling as tutor to Mr Graham, the younger, of Balgowan. Macpherson had in his possession several transcripts of Gaelic poems taken down from the recital of old people in the North. Of one or two of these Home procured translations, and, struck by their singular beauty, sent them to Dr Hugh Blair, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh. The latter pressed Macpherson for translations of his remaining pieces, and, as a result, published at Edinburgh in 1760 a small volume, "Fragments of Ancient

Poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language." This publication at once created the utmost interest in the Scottish metropolis, and presently, at a dinner of the chief literati there, Macpherson was commissioned to search the Highlands for further poetic remains. In the course of his undertaking he discovered that the finest of the extant Gaelic compositions were attributed to Ossian, son of Fingal, a warrior bard of remote antiquity.

The product of the search was published by Macpherson in London in 1762, in two volumes of prose translations, under the title of "Fingal: an. Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books, with other Lesser Poems." In the following year he printed a second instalment—"Temora: an Epic Poem in Eight Books, with other Poems." These works became immediately immensely popular. They were translated into nearly every European language, and have made some mark on the literature of most European countries. Their effect may be traced conspicuously in several of the sayings of Napoleon, who, it is recorded, never travelled without an Italian version of "Ossian" at his hand.

In London, however, there existed at that time among literary men, a violent anti-Scottish sentiment. Dr Johnson was dictator in the English world of letters, and as the discovery of a Homer among a nation upon which he was never weary of bestowing his sneers appeared to him altogether preposterous, he lost no time in formulating a charge of forgery. The human memory, he urged, was incapable of preserving poems of such length from any remote time, while as for written collections, such as Macpherson averred that he had used, he roundly declared his belief that there was not a book in the Gaelic language a hundred years old. "The poems of Ossian," he concluded, in his "Journey to the Western Islands," "never existed in any other form than that which we have seen; the editor or author never could show the original, nor can it be shown by any other."

Hume, the historian, followed up this attack by demanding proof that there existed in the memory of the Highlands any Gaelic poem corresponding exactly and completely to a translation by Macpherson. And the acme of the adverse criticism was reached in 1805, when Mr Malcolm Laing, in two volumes of "Notes

and Illustrations" to Ossian, proceeded to show how everything of value in Macpherson's translations had been stolen from such sources as the Bible, Homer, and Milton.

These attacks were answered by such writers as Dr Blair, Sir John Sinclair, and the Committee of the Highland Society appointed to accumulate evidence and arrive at a judicial decision on the subject. Of Mr Laing it was said by one of his opponents, that he was "one of those detectors of plagiarisms and discoverers of coincidences whose exquisite penetration and acuteness can find anything anywhere." And, indeed, a glance at his charges of minute, learned, and painstaking ingenuity in plagiarism is enough to assure the reader that if these could be substantiated they would prove Macpherson the most marvellous phenomenon of literary ingenuity, industry, and sagacity that the world has seen.

Hume's demand was answered by the publication of the Highland Society's "Report" in 1805, containing as it did testimony to the exact existence in Gaelic of many parts of the works translated by Macpherson; while Dr Johnson's assertions were refuted by the publication of Macpherson's originals in 1807,

and by the production of the Dean of Lismore's collection, written before 1537, and now in the Advocates' Library, which, besides containing many incidents and whole passages which occurred in Macpherson's translation, contains in several cases the distinct superscription, "The author of this is Ossian, the son of Finn."

Regarding the memory argument, it has been pointed out by later writers that the Greek "Iliad" and "Odyssey," and the great Finnish epic, the "Kalavala," were preserved by this means from an antiquity much more remote than that of Ossian; and to the Scot who has been used in his childhood to such exercises as the repetition of the Shorter Catechism and the 119th Psalm, it will be unnecessary to refer to such cases as that recorded in his diary by Burns, who at Jedburgh was taken to see one Esther, "a very remarkable woman, who could repeat Pope's 'Homer' from beginning to end."

The details of all the arguments used for and against the good faith of Macpherson cannot be given here. They will be found very fully recounted in any recent edition of his translation. It will be enough for the present purpose to say that while there are still many

who, like Macaulay, appeared inclined to ridicule the entire works published under the name of Ossian as spurious, and there are others who as eagerly proclaim these works entirely genuine, the criticism of such as have really studied the question appears to take a middle course.

That ancient Gaelic poems attributed to Ossian exist in the Highlands cannot be doubted, since the publication of such collections as the Dean of Lismore's book, and, most recently, the "*Reliquiæ Celticæ*" of the late Dr Cameron, of Brodick. That these formed the staple of Macpherson's work must also, upon evidence already alluded to, be admitted. But it seems impossible also to avoid the conclusion that, in fitting them upon the classic epic model, Macpherson departed from the strictly defined province of translator, and exercised somewhat freely the privileges of selection and collation. Such, to judge from recent information, seems likely to be the final verdict upon the great Ossianic question.

"Christ's Kirk on the Green" and "Peblis to the Play" have long formed matter of controversy between contending editors and writers of literary history, one party attributing the poems, fine pictures as they are of rustic humour and merry-

making in early times, to James I. of Scotland, author of "The King's Quair"; others attributing them to that monarch's poetic and romantic descendant, James V., otherwise famous for his rollicking compositions, "The Gaberlunzie Man" and "The Jolly Beggar"; while a third party of critics consider the two poems the work of some writer unknown.

All the points of evidence in the controversy, which has been carried on since the discovery of the Bannatyne MS. in the beginning of the eighteenth century, need not now be recounted. The chief arguments—that previous to the discovery of the Bannatyne MS. the poems were universally ascribed by tradition to James V., and that in subject, style, and strain of humour they exhibit a strong family likeness to the acknowledged poems of that king—seem to favour the authorship of the latter monarch, and under his name they have lately been reprinted, with a summary of the whole discussion, in the Abbotsford Series of Scottish Poets.

"Sir Tristram," the most beautiful extant specimen of the early Romance literature of this country, first printed from the Auchinleck MS.

by Scott in 1804, as the composition of Thomas of Ercildoune, has also been the subject of much literary dispute. All the arguments for and against the authorship of "Thomas the Rhymer" have been detailed by Mr G. P. M'Neill in the introduction of his admirable edition of the poem for the Scottish Text Society published in 1886. The same thing has been done in an able article on "The Romance of Sir Tristram" in all its versions, which appeared in *The Scottish Review* for July 1889. The point upon which most stress has been laid by adverse critics is contained in the opening stanza of the romance:—

"Y was at Ertheldoune,
With Tomas spak Y thare, &c."

It has also been urged that, whatever may be its authorship, the composition has been at least transcribed by an English hand.

Regarding the first point, on the other side, Sir Walter Scott and Mr M'Neill have both remarked that in early times a poet's only method of perpetuating his claims of authorship was by inserting his name in the text. Wyntoun, for instance, quotes himself as author in the

eighth book of his own undoubted work, the
"Cronykil of Scotland"—

"Here Wyntoun poyntis in this dyte
Quhat he gert off this tretis wryt."

And the authors of many books of the New Testament follow the same custom. The question of the authorship of "Sir Tristram" will probably never be indisputably set at rest, but this has been done as nearly as possible by a reference in the work of a contemporary of True Thomas. In the Introduction to his "Annals," Robert Mannyng, of Brunne, is found to have written:—

"I see in song, in sedgeyng tale,
Of Erceldoune and of Kendale,
Non tham sayis as thai thaim wrought,
And in ther saying it semes noght,
That may thou here in Sir Tristrem.
Ouer gestes it has the steem,
Ouer all that is or was,
If men it sayd as made Thomas."

II.

THE "Ode to the Cuckoo," though one of the shortest of English poems, has been the subject of perhaps the most disagreeable controversy in

literature. In other cases the question has been one either of an attempt to foist a modern composition upon antiquity, or of the discovery or settlement of an uncertain authorship. But regarding the "Ode to the Cuckoo," the charge is one of stealing and appropriating the finest composition of a dead poet.

The facts of the case may be briefly recounted. Michael Bruce, a young divinity student, died of consumption at his native place, Kinnesswood, near Lochleven, in 1767, at the age of twenty-one. During his last months he occupied himself in carefully copying into a bound quarto note book the poems which he had composed during his career at the University and Divinity Hall.

A few months after his death, John Logan, a college friend of the dead poet, at that time a tutor in the family of Sir John Sinclair, Bart., visited Kinnesswood, and obtained from Alexander Bruce, the simple-minded father of the poet, not only all his son's MSS., including this quarto volume of poetry, but all the correspondence from and to Michael Bruce which could be secured. Besides promising faithfully to return every one of these papers, Logan, it appears, expressed his belief that, from the publication

of the poems, he should realise such a sum as would maintain Mr and Mrs Bruce in comfort for the rest of their lives.

It was not till 1770, however, three years after he had received the papers, that a slight volume was published, entitled "Poems on Several Occasions," by Michael Bruce. This volume contained only seventeen poems, and in a preface by the anonymous editor, it was stated that "to make up a miscellany, some poems, written by different authors, were inserted, all of them original, and none of them destitute of merit." The name of none of these authors was given, nor was their work in any way distinguished from that of the main writer. "The reader of taste," said the preface, "will easily distinguish them from those of Michael Bruce without their being particularised by any mark."

Six copies of this volume were all that Alexander Bruce ever received by way of profit from the publication. When he turned over its pages, he is recorded to have burst into tears, and exclaimed, "Where are my son's Gospel sonnets?" And upon journeying painfully to Edinburgh to recover the MSS. confided to Logan, all that he received back were a few loose papers, first

sketches of some of the poems; while he was informed that the quarto volume had gone amissing, Logan expressing the fear that "the servants had singed fowls with it." The old man returned broken-hearted to his native village, and died in 1772. The worst, however, was yet to follow. In 1781 appeared "Poems, by the Rev. Mr Logan, one of the ministers of Leith." In this thin octavo volume was included the gem of the previous publication, the famous "Ode to the Cuckoo," as well as nine hymns which were at once recognised by the villagers of Kinnesswood as the missing "Gospel sonnets," or paraphrases, of Michael Bruce.

From that date the controversy as to the authorship has continued. Upon Logan's side the publication of the compositions under his own name has been almost the only argument. Following this, however, Dr Anderson, in his collection of the British poets, assigned the ode to Logan. Being taken to task for so doing by one of the Kinnesswood villagers, he cited Dr Baird as his authority. He had also been assured by Mrs Hutcheson, Logan's cousin, that she had seen the ode in her relative's handwriting before it was printed. Dr Robertson, again, Logan's

literary executor, in the life prefixed to that author's "Sermons," averred that Logan had acknowledged to him his own authorship of the "Cuckoo"; and also that the ode was handed about among Logan's literary acquaintances in East Lothian probably, though not certainly as early as 1767. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that none of Logan's acquaintances has ever been forthcoming to convert this probability into certainty, and that although Mrs Hutcheson and others might see it in Logan's caligraphy as early as 1767, this could hardly prove his authorship, as he received the MSS. of Bruce in that year. Further, in the year following Dr Anderson's publication, Dr Baird produced a new edition of Bruce's poems, in which he included the "Ode to the Cuckoo" without comment, having meanwhile, it appears, obtained a copy of the poem in Bruce's own handwriting. This testimony might be enough, but several points have further been elicited by Dr Mackelvie and Dr Grosart in the "Lives" prefixed to their respective editions of Bruce's poems.

In reply to Dr Anderson's later inquiries, David Pearson, the intimate friend and bedfellow of the

poet, wrote that on going to visit Alexander Bruce a few days after his son's death, the old man brought out his son's "poem-book" and read the "Ode to the Cuckoo" and the "Musiad" to his visitor, being much overcome in the reading. The same witness also stated that he had repeatedly both heard and read the ode during the lifetime of the poet, and, he averred explicitly, "the 'Cuckoo' and the hymns in the end of Logan's book are assuredly Michael Bruce's productions."

John Birrell, another intimate friend of Bruce, through whose hands the poet's remaining papers passed from Alexander Bruce to Dr Baird, informed Dr Mackelvie how again and again he had seen the old man take up the little volume of 1770, and, reading the "Ode to the Cuckoo," the "Elegy," and "Lochleven," weep as he recalled the circumstances under which these and other pieces were composed by his son.

Two further points remain. Professor Davidson, of Aberdeen, stated to Dr Mackelvie that his father, Dr Davidson, of Kinross, had told him he had seen a letter from Michael Bruce in which he said, "You will think me ill employed, for I am writing about a gowk" (cuckoo); and that subsequently he himself (the professor), on visiting

in the neighbourhood of Kinnesswood about the year 1786, had seen, in the possession of a Mr Bickerton, a copy of the ode, written on a very small quarto page (exactly the shape of page upon which all extant letters of the poet are written), signed Michael Bruce, and with the single line below it, "You will think I might have been better employed than writing about a gowk." The handwriting, Mr Bickerton assured the professor, was that of the poet. This, if preserved, would have furnished absolute evidence. Unfortunately the paper has been lost, and though it is conjectured to have been the same MSS. which was afterwards in the possession of Dr Baird, it has so far escaped discovery.

Most convincing of all, however, is the fact that the case has virtually been tried in a court of law. In 1782, the year following Logan's publication of the ode as his own, when a few admirers of Bruce in Stirling were proposing to reprint the volume of 1770, Logan applied for a bill of suspension and interdict against the printers and publishers. In his pleading he grounded his right to prohibit on his proprietorship, describing himself as "in a great measure the author of the collection of the poems in question." At the trial the decision

was given against Logan ; his alleged rights were set aside, and his statements held disproved.

The authenticity of the paraphrases need not be entered upon here. It is enough to say that in their case, the villagers having committed them to memory at the psalmody class for which they were written between the years 1764 and 1767, and written copies of all of them bearing these dates having been extant as late as 1837, the proof of Bruce's authorship is equally strong. It is true that Logan throughout made considerable verbal alterations on ode and paraphrases; but few will consider that such alterations could entitle him to claim the authorship, as he did.

Finally, it has been pointed out as somewhat damaging to the case of Logan, that in his volume of 1781, he printed as his own, two paraphrases, the second and eighteenth in the authorised Scottish version, which, almost word for word, had been published in the interim edition of the "Scottish Paraphrases" in 1745, one of them, "O God of Bethel," being by Dr Doddridge, and republished among that divine's posthumous hymns in 1755. A further circumstance of similar sort, damaging to the literary credit of Logan, was cited lately from

the Rev. Peter Mearn's book on "Muirkirk and Neighbourhood":

"Having got possession of one of the manuscript volumes on history of the Rev. William Rutherford, D.D., afterwards minister of Muirkirk, Logan in the college session of 1779-80 read these lectures with much applause as professedly his own. Dr Rutherford, however, in Logan's lifetime, afterwards published the lectures as his in a volume, and Logan did not, and dared not, dispute Dr Rutherford's claim."

By the editor of "The Poetic Wreath" of 1836, it was urged that "no one of Logan's unquestioned pieces makes the slightest approach to the Ode in beautiful simplicity." In a letter addressed to Principal Shairp of St Andrews, printed in 1873, David Laing, the well-known antiquary, urged the hearsay nature of the evidence collected by Dr Mackelvie,—collected after a lapse of from twenty to forty years from the time of occurrence. To this letter, in the same year, Principal Shairp replied in *Good Words*, where, after balancing the evidence for both sides, he gave it as his opinion that the "testimonies in favour of Bruce seem considerably to preponderate." The question of the

authorship of the Paraphrases has been the subject of articles by Dr J. Small in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* in 1877, and by Mr Cuthbert Hadden in the *Scottish Review* for October 1893, and no longer ago than the early part of 1897, the whole question at issue was opened up again by a controversy with Dr Grosart in one of the leading literary journals of London. Notwithstanding so much writing by experts, and the amount of evidence available, it may be doubted whether the question of Logan's guilt or innocence will ever now receive a final settlement.

The Ettrick Shepherd's appearance in the field of questioned literature need hardly be mentioned. He is accused indeed of having tampered considerably with some of the Border ballads which passed through his hands; but the charge has not been very definitely formulated against him. Nor can his "Poetic Mirror" of 1817 be considered a subject of serious question, though for a very short time it did succeed in deceiving the public. The story of the production is somewhat interesting, and the work itself almost unique, being rivalled only, about the same period, by the "Rejected Addresses" of Horace and James Smith. Having hit upon the idea of an

anthology, by which he calculated to make his fortune, Hogg applied to all the conspicuous poets of his time—Southey, Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, and others—each to furnish him with a poem. This most of them promised to do, and on the strength of these promises Hogg advertised his volume. But one after another the greatest poets withdrew from their undertaking, and the poems which actually were sent in were the veriest gleanings from the waste-paper basket. At his wits' end, the Shepherd sat down, and wrote the promised contributions, with perhaps one exception, himself, and in three months the volume made its appearance as advertised. The imitations were admirable, if here and there somewhat too pronounced. Wordsworth and Coleridge in particular were amusingly caricatured; Hogg did not spare himself; and in the general amusement which followed the discovery, the world was generously admitted to laugh at as well as with the perpetrator of the hoax.

It is no part of the design of the present essay to deal with the mystery which at first surrounded the appearance of songs like "Auld Robin Gray," the two versions of "The Flowers of the Forest,"

Pinkerton's masterpiece, "Bothwell Bank," and Lady Nairne's many exquisite lyrics. It seems to have been a fashion in Edinburgh at the close of last century and beginning of the present to conceal the fact of authorship as if it were a crime. Mackenzie's "Man of Feeling" in 1771 remained so strictly anonymous, in spite of its popularity, that its authorship was claimed by a Mr Eccles of Bath, with a manuscript copy corrected and added to, to prove his claim. And all the world is aware of the great secret, so long and so well kept, of the authorship of the Waverley Novels. All these half-playful mysteries have long ago been cleared up, they can no longer be regarded as questions of authenticity, and in none of the cases, from the outset, were the canons of literary honour tampered with.

Allan Cunningham stands convicted of a graver breach of literary good faith. The story of his temptation and his transgression is almost identical with that of Lady Wardlaw. For both of them it may be said that, in supplying what appeared to be a demand of the hour, they merely seized the skirts of happy chance to gain an immediate hearing for works which would otherwise, sooner

or later, have made their way to certain popularity and fame. In both cases also, it may be pleaded, the transgression was acknowledged before much real harm was done. The facts of Cunningham's delinquency are well known. When the antiquarian Cromek, in the early part of the present century, was engaged in gathering the finest of the flotsam and jetsom of the popular poetry of the south-west of Scotland for his "Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song," Cunningham gravely furnished him, piece after piece, with compositions of his own which he gave the collector to understand were genuine ballads of antiquity. These compositions contributed largely to the success of the "Remains," and if they destroyed its integrity as a collection of ancient poetry, they increased its value as a book to be enjoyed. It was not long before the real authorship of the contributions was revealed, and upon the wave of popularity thus created, the poet was encouraged to proceed to London, where he found permanent support, and became one of the recognised poets and writers of his time. So late as 1827, however, William Motherwell, in the introduction to his famous "Ballad Minstrelsy," took occasion to hurl

invective against the impostures foisted upon the public by the unlucky Cromek.

Such are some of the questions which for two centuries have taxed and tantalised and set by the ears the editors of Scottish literature, and it must be confessed that some of the charges involved have been serious enough. Most of them, it will be seen, have been of an antiquarian, personal, or purely literary interest, rather than of moment in practical affairs. For bearing upon actual life none of them at all approaches in interest one sphynx-like problem of English journalism.

The authorship of the "Letters of Junius," contributed during the years 1769-72 to Woodfall's "Public Advertiser," was in its time a question rather of political than of literary importance. Levelled for the most part at the Dukes of Bedford and Grafton, these invectives were weighted with such knowledge and hurled with such force as seriously to embarrass a government. For years, like a hidden Jove, the author sat launching his thunderbolts at intervals; and notwithstanding the violent efforts made to discover him, he remained unknown, an enigma even, is believed, to his publisher Woodfall, who was

punished severely in default. Many and ingenious have been the efforts made by historians and critics to discover his personality. Burke, Hamilton, Lyttelton, Lord George Sackville, and Sir Philip Francis have in turn been selected, but to the present day the mystery of the authorship of this, the finest and fiercest invective in the language, like, as has been said, the mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask or of the executioner of Charles I., remains unsolved. And so it seems likely to remain.

Only three cases remain which need be mentioned, but one of these is perhaps the most famous, as it was at once the most ingenious and most futile of English literary impositions.

Thomas Chatterton, born in 1752, was the son of a sexton and parish schoolmaster connected with the old church of Saint Mary Redcliffe at Bristol. In the muniment room of that church had been preserved an ancient chest known as Canynge's coffer, in which mouldered many parchments relating to pious benefactions of a citizen of the time of Edward IV. The most important of these had been removed, but many had been thrown back as useless, and had been used by Chatterton's father, it is said, as coverings

for his scholars' copy-books. The youthful poet, who was also an attorney's clerk, conceived the not unpicturesque idea of furnishing forth his own compositions as discoveries which he had made among these manuscripts of the coffer. To account for their existence he invented a priest of the fifteenth century, one Thomas Rowley, who, he averred, had been employed by Canynge as a collector of antiquities, and whom he put forth as the author of the poems which constituted the greater part of his "discoveries."

From the remains of Rowley's heraldic studies Chatterton furnished a Mr Burgam of Bristol, with a pedigree tracing his descent from Od, Earl of Blois and Lord of Holderness. And when a new bridge over the Avon was opened he opportunely discovered an ancient account of fifteenth century tournaments, processions, and religious ceremonies which had dignified the opening of an older viaduct. This was inserted in the *Bristol Journal* under the title of "A Description of the Friars' first Passing over the Old Bridge, taken from an Ancient Manuscript." A more daring opportunity, however, presently occurred. Horace Walpole was at that time collecting materials for his "Anecdotes of British Painters,"

and Chatterton, to help the work, forwarded him a list of artists, "Carvillers and Peyncters," who had flourished in Bristol in mediæval times. At the same time he enclosed a number of poems, some in antiquated writing, which purported to be originals, while others were represented merely as transcripts. This was in 1769, and, encouraged by the polite reception of his communication, and the apparent interest which it had excited, Chatterton wrote a second letter informing Walpole of his situation, and asking assistance to enable him to follow out his scheme of adopting poetry as a profession. Meanwhile, however, both Gray and Mason, to whom Walpole had submitted some of the poems, had declared them to be spurious, and the antiquarian, chagrined perhaps at the deception which had been practised on him, returned the MSS., and declined to have more to do with the poet. The imposition by which the daring boy had endeavoured to gain attention for his work was now exposed, and though he escaped to London, and for a time contrived to exist on the pittance which he received for the teeming produce of his brain, stern necessity closed upon him, and at last, finding himself absolutely destitute, after actually

starving for several days, his dreams of glory and immortality collapsed, and, succumbing to despair, he shut himself up in his garret, tore up all his manuscripts, and died tragically of poison administered by his own hand.

In the light of modern knowledge Chatterton's imitations of antique composition would never have passed muster for a moment, though at the time when they appeared in the *Town and Country Magazine* they occasioned a warm antiquarian controversy. Their claim to antiquity lay almost entirely in an affectation of spelling; this cleared away, the composition and grammatical structure stand revealed as entirely modern, while the few ancient words which the poet has attempted to borrow from the works of Chaucer and the like, are more than once used in an erroneous or quite modern sense. The marvel in Chatterton's case is that a boy of fifteen should have been able to impose at all for a time, as he did, upon men of learning and discernment.

William Henry Ireland's literary forgeries are second to those of Chatterton in point both of time and notoriety, though the manner of their production bears some resemblance to that of the Rowley poems. It was to please his father, who

was an eager Shakespearean enthusiast, that Ireland was first led to forge the documents to which he attached the name of the great dramatist. The success of his first attempt, purporting to be a lease of property signed by Shakespeare, led to the production of a large variety of papers. These included receipts for money, acting agreements, a profession of faith, and, most curious of all, a love letter to Anne Hathaway, enclosing a lock of the poet's hair.

These discoveries Ireland professed to have made among the papers of a gentleman who, for certain romantic reasons, refused to allow his name to be made public. They were received with eager enthusiasm, not only by an antiquarian coterie, but by many well-known men, such as Dr Parr and James Boswell. The imposture reached its height when Ireland announced the discovery of an entire new play. This, entitled "Vortigern," was purchased by Sheridan, and produced, with John Kemble in the title-rôle, before an overflowing house at Drury Lane Theatre. When seen upon the stage, however, stripped of the peculiarity of antique handwriting and the like mechanical adjuncts, the forgery in its weakness and crudity was at once revealed, and the play

proved an entire failure. Ireland, upon this, overwhelmed by the accumulation of hostile criticism, was at last induced by his father to make a full confession, the tract containing which was published in 1796.

While Ireland's case resembled Chatterton's in the fact of his youth—he was no more than nineteen when his entire imposture was disclosed—the quality of his work was very different, and probably it would be impossible for the most curious of bibliophiles to discover a copy of “Vortigern” extant at the present day.

By no means so ephemeral was the third great literary imposture to which reference has been made. In the year 1758 there was printed at Copenhagen an edition of the works of the ancient chroniclers, Gildas and Nennius, and with them, a treatise, “*De Situ Britanniaë*,” purporting to be the work of Richard of Cirencester, a mediæval monk at Westminster. The volume was “edited” by Charles Julius Bertram. Another work, of secondary value, the “*Speculum Historiale*,” from the pen of Richard of Cirencester, was already known, and lent countenance to the new discovery. The latter was accepted as genuine by Dr William Stukeley, an antiquary of repute at the time, and,

on the strength of his sanction, it was used and quoted by such writers as Lingard and Gibbon. For many years, indeed, no doubt of its authenticity was raised, till it became the rule with historians to consult and compare original documents. Then some strange discrepancies were discovered. A few of these were pointed out by Robertson in his "Scotland under her Early Kings." In the treatise attributed to Richard, "the district beyond the northern wall is erected into a province, and called Vespasiana, in compliment to Domitian, 'in whose reign it was conquered,' and, with Meata, to have been lost under Trebellius, the successor of Lucullus, who had been put to death by Domitian. But of these two provinces, which must have been created by his own father-in-law, Tacitus displays a profound ignorance. Valentia, again, the creation of Theodosius about 369, is said to have been made a consular province by Constantine, who died two-and-thirty years before."

The question was only set finally at rest in 1863-69 by Professor J. E. B. Mayor, who, in editing Richard of Cirencester's undoubted work, the "Speculum Historiale," took occasion to demonstrate exactly, from external and internal evidence, the absolute spuriousness of the whole

treatise put upon the world by Bertram. With much learning, Mayor traced the various sources from which the forgery had been compiled, pointed out its many inconsistencies and absurdities, and fairly convicted the "discoverer" as "a forger, alike contemptible as a penman, Latinist, historian, and critic." Nevertheless this tissue of forgery had imposed on the learned world for over a century, and may be found quoted as an authority in many a learned work.

While such attempts as those of Chatterton, Ireland, and Bertram are remarkable as showing how it may have been possible for talent and boldness to pass off their productions for a time as works of antiquity, they suffice to prove also the difficulty of the permanent establishment of any literary forgery as genuine. As scholarship has accumulated materials, even such temporary success, it may be believed, has become all but unfeasible.

Enough, however, has perhaps been said to show that both variety and intricacy, rivalling the variety and intricacy of trials in more regular courts of law, belong to the literary causes which have fallen during the last two hundred years to be tried at the bar of public opinion.

INN ALBUMS.

THE ordinary tourist of the present day, journeying on beaten lines, and living everywhere in great hotels on metropolitan fare, knows but little of the charm which attends the wanderings of the less conventional traveller. For one thing, the German waiter of the tourist caravansery makes but a poor substitute for the trim maid who attends the wayfarer at the homelier inn. The smart clerk, too, who "books" the visitor in the office of the big hotel, and hands him over with a room number to the elevator attendant, fills not at all the place of the hearty host of the less pretentious establishment. The manner in which the latter appears in person to welcome his guests is enough of itself to give another character to the entire entertainment, and one remembers many an occasion, when a wet day, perhaps, has driven one from the loch or the hill, on which the humorous and well-informed talk of "mine host" has formed very

acceptable consolation. It is with thankfulness that the lover of old-fashioned travel reassures himself that the landlord of the "George" or the "Red Lion" is not yet altogether a genus extinct, and that the comfortable hostelrys throughout the country, which for a century and a half have gone by these names, are still to be found. In the quiet landward towns of Scotland, like Linlithgow and Falkirk, and in some of the less-frequented seaward places, like Berwick and Stranraer, one comes upon perhaps the most substantial of these long-established hostels—houses that have known the stir of coaching-times, and still retain the dignity of posting quarters. But the pedestrian and the angler know of many a cosy haunt, by lochside and in Highland glen more particularly, where, at the present day, it is still possible to enjoy the old-fashioned pleasure of "taking one's ease at one's inn." In these places life goes at a leisurely rate. There is no fuss or commotion, there are no trains to catch, and the chief and only excitement is the passing of the daily steamer or post-gig. The main consideration is the weather, for the morrow's fishing or the morrow's tramp; and in the cosy parlour, of an

evening, when the fly-casts are being overhauled, and the dew of Ben Nevis is in modest request, many a joke is recounted, and many a good story told.

One of the inevitable belongings of such an angling hostelrie is its "visitors' book." Some-time or other during his stay the guest is sure to take this up, to con through the names of former sojourners, and probably, if the ink-bottle on the side-table be not dry, and the pens not all too rusty, to duly inscribe his own. This volume is a very different affair from the cut and dry hotel book in which one writes one's name on entering the "Grand" or the "Metropole." That is no more than a bare record of names hastily inscribed under the eye of the clerk amid the haste and worry of arrival. The visitors' book of an angling inn, on the other hand, is a production of leisure, bearing on its pages the marks of many minds, and containing, along with much that is pompous, and not a little that is puerile, a flash here and there of genuine wit and many a touch of curious humour. For it is not names only that are inscribed on these pages. Of a quiet evening, with nothing to do, with the pen in his hand and the open page before him,

the wayfarer has been tempted frequently to add some impromptu memorial of his impressions. The instinct is of the same kind, no doubt, as that which urges the inscribing of initials on mountain summits and historic spots. The proceeding, however, must be allowed to be somewhat less undignified, and to admit of somewhat more interesting results. It has, at anyrate, sanction which is old enough, and which ought to be sufficiently respectable.

Robert Burns was probably the most inveterate of all such inscription writers. Seldom or never, it is true, did he write these happy impromptus in the actual visitors' books of the inns at which he happened to rest; but a window-pane or a panel over a mantelpiece served his purpose equally well. His lines entitled "The Hermit," it is carefully noted, were "written on a marble sideboard in the hermitage belonging to the Duke of Athole in the wood of Aberfeldy;" and his finest piece of purely natural description—"Admiring Nature in her wildest grace"—was, it will be remembered, "written with a pencil over the chimney-piece in the parlour of the inn at Kenmore." On a pane of glass at Friars'arse Hermitage in Nithsdale he scratched quite

a considerable poem. And on the window of an inn at Stirling—rather a dangerous place for such an effusion—he inscribed an epigram of as fervid Jacobitism as was ever penned.

Another anecdote records how the poet and a friend were one day sitting at the window of an inn at Moffat, when a lady known to them both, who was remarkable for the delicacy and smallness of her figure, rode past in the company of a dame of imposingly stalwart proportions. “Why,” asked Burns’s friend at the sight, “has God made the one lady so small and the other so large?” The bard thought for a second, and then with a diamond wrote on the window pane:—

“ Ask why God made the gem so small,
And why so huge the granite !
Because God meant mankind should set
The higher value on it.”

On a further occasion, in the King’s Arms Tavern in Dumfries, Burns overheard a country gentleman make some disparaging remark on the subject of excisemen. The poet, himself a member of the maligned profession, naturally felt chagrined, and, taking out a diamond, wrote on the window the following ingenious *tu quoque*:—

“Ye men of wit and wealth, why all this sneering
'Gainst poor Excisemen? give the cause a hearing :
What are your landlords' rent rolls, taxing ledgers?
What premiers? what even monarchs? mighty gaugers.
Nay, what are priests, those seeming godly wisemen?
What are they, pray, but spiritual Excisemen?”

And once more, on the window of the Globe tavern,
in the same town, he left a stanza of excuse :—

“The greybeard, old Wisdom, may boast of his treasures,
Give me with gay Folly to live ;
I grant him his cold-blooded, time-settled pleasures,
But Folly has raptures to give.”

Both of these last possess the epigrammatic point which forms the best pretext for inscriptions of the kind; the latter, in particular, remains pat to the occasion and the place. Another couple of verses which Burns addressed to the landlady of the inn at Roslin might be taken as a type of the sort of lucubration most frequently to be encountered in the inn albums of to-day—

“My blessings on you, sonsy wife !
I ne'er was here before ;
You've gi'en us walth for horn and knife,
Nae heart could wish for more.

“Heaven keep you free frae care and strife
Till far ayont fourscore ;
And while I toddle on through life
I'll ne'er gang by your door.”

The most telling inscriptions of the inn album, however, are not always those written in rhyme. After Burns came Scott, and one or two anecdotes of that greatest of the romancists, recorded in Lockhart's "Life," relate to inscriptions at wayside hostelries.

One of these refers to a visit which Scott with a party of friends once paid to the scene of James IV.'s defeat at Flodden. The poet was then at the summit of his fame, and an innkeeper of the neighbourhood, who had profited largely from the increase of custom since "Marmion" appeared, attempted to improve the occasion. He pressed his visitor to allow him to set up a "Scott's Head" for a sign, and this being refused, returned, not at all abashed, to the attack with a request for at least a line of poetry by way of motto. More amused than annoyed, probably, by the man's effrontery, Scott, it is said, took the book from the hand of Boniface, and as he turned the pages his eye lighted on the well-known lines—

"Drink, weary pilgrim, drink and pray
For the kind soul of Sybil Grey,
Who built this cross and well."

"There, my man," he said, "is the very thing you want ; omit the 'r' and make it, 'Drink, weary pilgrim, drink and *pay*.'"

In striking contrast to the *élan* of that occasion is the other inscription attributed by his biographer to Sir Walter. It belongs to that last eager journey of the wearied and dying man, when the voyage in search of health had failed, and, turning from Italy, he had set his face with feverish anxiety towards the far country of the north, where his own Abbotsford lay under the Eildon Hills. The latest specimen, says Lockhart, of the handwriting of Sir Walter Scott occurs in the "Book of Guests," kept at one of the inns on the road from Rome to the Tyrol. There his autograph is inscribed significantly, "Sir Walter Scott—for Scotland."

Instances like these, known to every reader of books, have no doubt gone far to perpetuate traditions which suggest the appropriateness of inscriptions in the guest books and inn albums of to-day.

It cannot be said that the modern inn-album inscriptions rank always as very finished productions. Even men of genius, when they leave a line or two to commemorate their stay at a

wayside hostelrie, seem to claim a certain freedom, and dash off their verse with an abandon inspired by the circumstances of the hour. An instance of this is recorded in the well-known "Life of a Scottish Probationer." There used to be a little white fisher inn by the roadside at Lochranza, in the Island of Arran. The inn has now disappeared, and in its place stands a new hotel. But the long, low-roofed dining-room of the old hostelrie held memories of many a merry party which foregathered there, and the guest-book, which may possibly still be in existence, must contain many a quip and epigram over well-known names. It was of his stay there with Brown of Paisley, Robertson of Irvine, and some other rare spirits, that Thomas Davidson, the "Probationer" in question, wrote the lines—

"Now to drink let us offer a stanza!
Great Bacchus doth dwell at Lochranza;
We had blood of the vine,
In all manner of wine
Between Tagus and Rhine,
And whisky divine—
O, we drank like high Jove at Lochranza."

Much more deliberate than this, however, was John Bright when he condescended to turn a

verse of similar sort in a Highland hostelrie. It speaks the sober character of the man that in his staid antithetical lines, balanced after the manner of Pope, he managed to mingle along with his approval of the place a forcible expression of political sentiment. The lines were written in the visitors' book at Drumnadrochit, in Glen Urquhart, and run as follows:—

“In Highland glens 'tis far too oft observed
That man is chased away, and game preserved ;
Glen Urquhart is to me a lovelier glen—
Here deer and grouse have not supplanted men.”

In 1509 Glen Urquhart, with the great ancient castle at its mouth, was granted by James IV. to the Earls of Seafield. In their hands it still remains, and to their estate policy in the glen the compliment of the veteran economist was indirectly paid. At Drumnadrochit, however, as at Lochranza, it was the old inn that had the memories. A new hotel has supplanted the more homely house of entertainment in the glen, and there has hardly yet been time for the new hostelrie to gather about it the associations of its predecessor. The old inn of Drumnadrochit was a favourite haunt of Shirley Brooks,

and it was while staying there in the autumn of 1860 that he sent to *Punch* the letter which made the spot famous. "The inn," he wrote, "whence these lines are dated, faces a scene which happily is not too often to be observed in this planet. I say happily, sir, because we are all perfectly well aware that this world is a Vale of Tears, in which it is our duty to mortify ourselves, and make everybody else as uncomfortable as possible. If there were many places like Drumnadrochit, persons would be in fearful danger of forgetting that they ought to be miserable."

The visitors' book at this famous inn is especially rich in inscriptions, among which two are well worth quoting as types of inn-album verse. Both have been largely inspired, it will be seen, by the characteristic and unforgettable name of the spot.

"Stop, Traveller ! with well packed bag,
And hasten to unlock it ;
You'll ne'er regret it though you lag
A day at Drumnadrochit.

"Stop, Angler ! with your rod and creel,
If you with trout would stock it ;
I have nae doubt ye shall do weel
To stay at Drumnadrochit.

“Stop, Artist ! with your sketching-book,
For, gin ye can but tak’ it,
At Urquhart Castle ye should look—
’Tis close to Drumnadrochit.

“Stop, everyone who would combine
Care both of health and pocket,
You’ll find short bills and breezes fine
Prevail at Drumnadrochit.”

The other set of verses stands to the name of
Mr Frank Leslie, editor of *The Belfast News*.
It should be prefaced that the landlord’s name
is Wells, and that he has daughters.

Low in heart and low in pocket,
Come at once to Drumnadrochit.
Sick of snobs and tired of swells,
Sojourn at these pleasant Wells ;
Better door you cannot knock at
Than the one at Drumnadrochit.
Pleasant rooms and restful beds,
Pillows soft for heavy heads ;
Warmest welcome meets you there,
Best of drink and best of fare ;
Garden humming round with bees,
Seats where you may rest at ease ;
Mignonette and purple rocket
Scent the air at Drumnadrochit.
If for shooting you’re inclined,
Load your gun, but do not cock it,
And then off to Drumnadrochit.
If for angling you’ve a mind,
Screw your trout-line in its socket,
And then, ho, for Drumnadrochit !

No one wonders what o'clock it
Ever is at Drumnadrochit—
Pleasant place, may no one mock it !
But my song is getting long :
I think I'd better dock it. [^]
So farewell to thee, fair Wells !
And farewell to Drumnadrochit !

These are somewhat elaborate productions. The majority of inn-book inscriptions are of briefer and more epigrammatic sort. As with human displays in other arenas, those of least merit are invariably the most pompous and patronising. In fact, if one wished to discover how small a percentage of his fellow mortals is gifted with the sense of humour, or a perception of the ridiculous, he could hardly find a readier means of doing so than to turn the pages of the visitors' book at some small watering-place. It never seems to dawn upon the writers of some of these patronising inscriptions that they are producing mental portraits of themselves at which the profane will smile for several years to come. Smith, Esq., and family, "of Liverpool," who "were much gratified with the endeavour of mine host, and wish to commend this little inn," stand there, full length, on every other page, for quiet folk to grin at. It is true

that there are pompous hosts as well, who perhaps deserve some such patting on the head. But as a rule the landlord of the wayside inn proves, what his guests cannot always be said to be, exceedingly considerate and polite. The advertisement, it is true, of an inn on one of the smaller Western Islands, which used to appear in "Murray," gave one the impression of a very grandiloquent host indeed. It seemed more likely, however, in the circumstances, to have been the production of some wandering journalist or man of letters, adopted by the landlord, with as much shrewdness as humour, for business purposes. As a piece of unlimited high-falutin' it was perhaps the most perfect thing that has been done. After describing in the floweriest terms the endless thunder of Atlantic billows upon mile-long beaches of tawny sand, with which the visitor would there become acquainted, and after assuring guests of every comfort necessary for the enjoyment of life, it ended with the statement that a visit to the island would prove "the most memorable episode of a man's terrestrial career."

But the lines inscribed in visitors' books are not always of this complimentary sort. In the

album at the famous inn of Tibbie Shiels, by St Mary's Loch, some discontented tourist from the South has written a quatrain* of another cast :—

“ Scotch lochs are bonnie,
Scotch hills are high;
So are Scotch hotel bills—
Scotland good-bye ! ”

The verse, however, can hardly have been inspired by the charges of the hostelrie at which it was written; for “Tibbie Shiels” has always been remarkable for bills as modest as its fare is substantial and satisfactory. The same thing must be said of an inscription to be read in the album of the comfortable Shisken Inn in Arran. It is less spiteful, moreover, and more amusing than the last-named; and one can imagine the half-rueful, humorous twinkle in its author's eye as he penned it. It runs thus :—

“ I came here for rest and change;
The waiter got the change, and the landlord
took the rest.”

This inscription, by the way, like some others in these inn volumes, is liable to the suspicion of having been “conveyed” by the irresponsible

wayfarer from the book at some other place, for there is, or at anyrate there was when the lines were written, no waiter at Shisken. The landlady's daughter herself, after an excellent old Highland custom, used to attend the guests.

Equally uncomplimentary, and perhaps equally undeserved, is a rhyme said to have been indited in an old visitors' book at Rowardennan:—

“ Your salmon are so fat and red,
Your fowls so lean and blue,
Shows which by Providence were fed,
And which were fed by you.”

Another inscription from the book at Shisken Inn may be quoted here. The house is hardly less an anglers' haunt than is the classic “Tibbie Shiels” itself; and some wag, probably expecting the arrival of friends, has written under the names of himself and party the couplet:—

“ All flesh is grass, all grass is hay,
We're here to-morrow, and away to-day—
fishing.”

Such inscriptions, of course, make no pretensions to literary quality. They profess to be no more than the merest *jeux d'esprit* of wayfarers in

holiday humour. Nevertheless they possess an interest of their own, and a collection of them might possibly prove as amusing as many a more pretentious volume of humour and wit. It is not to be forgotten, however, that literature of the highest class has gathered about the house of public entertainment. Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims told their tales in such a wayside hostel; and one of Longfellow's best productions was his volume of "Tales of a Wayside Inn." In the old Hawes Inn, still standing at the Queen's Ferry, Lovel and Oldbuck dined at the beginning of "The Antiquary"; and at the inn at Burford Bridge, amid the quiet garden arbours and beside the eddying river, where the memorable parting occurred between Nelson and his Emma, Keats finished the writing of his "Endymion." Nor among such things is the "Inn Album" of Robert Browning to be forgotten. But finest of all special and direct encomiums of inn life remains Shenstone's famous set of verses, "Written at an Inn at Henley":—

"To thee, fair freedom, I retire
From flattery, cards, and dice, and din;
Nor art thou found in mansions higher
Than the low cot, or humble inn.

BUCENIAN PAPERS.

'Tis here with boundless power I reign;
 And every breath which I begin
 Turns to the purest night champagne;
 Such freedom flows it, at an inn.

 I fly from pomp, I fly from plate!
 I fly from dissembled's specious grin!
 Freedom I love, and form I hate,
 And choose my lodgings at an inn.

 Where water like my sordid ore,
 As that which else might hope to win;
 I have what courts have not in store,
 I have me freedom at an inn.

 Where'er he has travelled life's dull round,
 Where'er his stages may have been,
 I can't help but think he still has found
 The warmest welcome at an inn."

THE END.

" 'Tis here with boundless power I reign;
And every health which I begin
Converts dull port to bright champagne;
Such freedom crowns it, at an inn.

" I fly from pomp ! I fly from plate !
I fly from falsehood's specious grin !
Freedom I love, and form I hate,
And choose my lodgings at an inn.

" Here, waiter ! take my sordid ore,
Which lacqueys else might hope to win ;
It buys, what courts have not in store,
It buys me freedom at an inn.

" Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been.
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn."

THE END.



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